Sandwell
CHRONICLE

Thursday, January 4, 2018 | Read by more than 64,000 people | Price when sold 70p

NHS Trust well below national target for seeing patients

HUNDREDS WAIT TOO LONG IN A&E

Report by Clare Butler

MORE than 120 patients a day have been waiting for longer than four hours in A&E at Sandwell and City hospitals.

The figures came as the emergency department performance 'sharply deteriorated' during December.

Only 78 per cent of patients were seen within four hours, way below the national NHS target of 95 per cent.

It is a huge blow for health chiefs who had targeted reaching the 95 per cent standard by January 2018. The figures were revealed in the January board papers for Sandwell General and City Hospital, Birmingham.

It is stated: "Emergency Department performance has sharply deteriorated to 78 per cent month to date, equating to a daily average of 127 patients waiting over four hours for admission or discharge compared to our goal of 57.

"63 per cent of breaches are out of hours. Regionally and nationally we have been an outlier at times in month and must improve. We have 48 additional beds open as of December 27.

Slippage

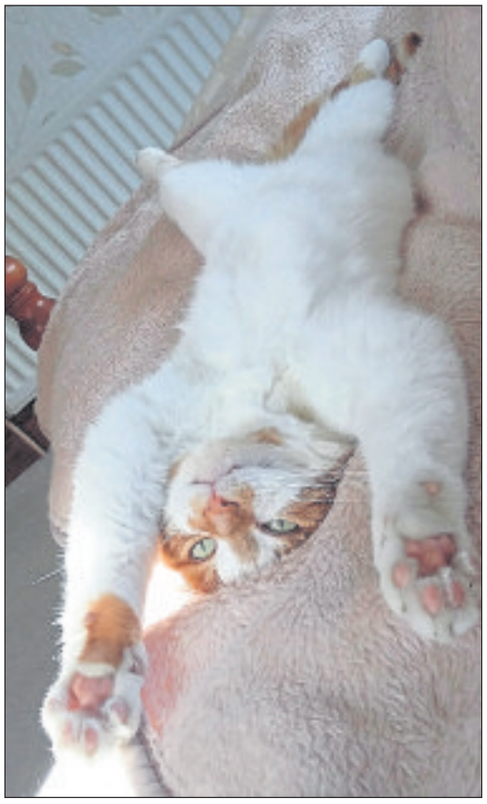
"The improvement approach remains centred on our ED and Patient Flow improvement plans. The recommendation remains that we persevere with the improvement plans as designed ensuring no further slippage with CEO review mid-January."

Councillor Bob Lloyd, who is part of Sandwell Council's Health Scrutiny Board, said: "The investment in the NHS is falling all the time so I do feel sympathy for the hospital management. If you look back 10 years ago then waiting times were way below. There is pressure as it is and then the A&E takes the brunt of it. People end up going there because of the cuts to the other services."

It was revealed in November that patients would be sent to GPs directly from Sandwell Hospital's A&E in a bid to ease pressure on staff this winter. From last month, A&E staff were able to decide whether patients would be better off being seen by a GP instead.

The patients would be booked in with an available GP practice or walk-in centre somewhere in the Sandwell borough and the results passed to their GP. The amount of patients who return to hospital after being sent to a GP will then be monitored to judge what impact it has.

NOW IT'S BEDTIME FOR TEDDY OUR PRIZE PET



Time to chill out – Teddy relaxing on the bed at home

ONE week on and all this attention is just wearing out poor Teddy. For those readers who missed the announcement last week this much-loved moggy – now seen chilling on the bed – won our Animal Crackers competition with the picture of him in the garden dovecote.

According to owner Vicky Sterrett, from Bloxwich, he just loves to get himself into lots of tight sports but here he is looking a lot more laid back. Obviously loving all the attention, he was a very clear winner with our many readers who emailed or posted in their votes.

The winning picture

Shortlist

From the shortlist of 10, taken from the more than 500 entries we had sent in, he was a clear winner. Vicky, from Bloxwich, said Teddy found her four years ago, arriving on her doorstep as a stray. She found that he wasn't microchipped and was about four years old. Vicky fell in love instantly and decided to keep him. "We have always thought he was a superstar and winning this competition has proved that other people think so as well," said Vicky.

"After speaking to Teddy we have decided to donate the £100 prize money to Walsall & Wolverhampton Cats Protection for all the amazing work they do," Vicky added.

Our shortlist included dogs, cats, guinea pigs, a tortoise, rabbit and even a hedgehog but it was Teddy who captured so many hearts.

He has a cheeky personality and is a very busy boy spending most of his time in the garden, in the greenhouse and of course the dovecote.

This was specially made by a carpenter at a local day care centre for adults with learning disabilities.

TRANSPORT

Grayling under fire after rail fares rise

RAIL fare rises for West Midlands passengers have been slammed by a Sandwell MP – as he called on Transport Secretary Chris Grayling to 'either get a grip or get out'.

John Spellar said it was outrageous fares had gone up – by 3.4 per cent – at a time when services were getting worse and rail bosses picked up multi-million pound salaries.The price hike, which is the biggest in five years, saw protests at stations including New Street and Snow Hill in Birmingham, where members of the National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (RMT) gave out flyers stating: "Cut fares not staff."

CHARITY

Mayor's praise for fundraising efforts

A MAYOR has hailed the efforts of people who raised hundreds of pounds for good causes. Nearly £600 was raised for the Mayor of Sandwell's charities at the West Bromwich Community Awards night, which was held at West Bromwich Town Hall last month.

Councillor Haque said: "I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone in West Bromwich who gave donations or took part in the auction at the awards evening."

He is raising money for the Midlands Air Ambulance and Your Trust Charity.

PLANNING

'Grot-spot' pub site set for flats scheme

THE 'grot-spot' site of former pub that is set to be knocked down and replaced by 20 flats has been put on the market for £350,000.

The Timbertree, in Valley Road, Cradley Heath, will be bulldozed after the plans for housing were given the go-ahead in 2016.

The site had been blighted by anti-social behaviour in recent years.

It has now been put on the market by Cottons Chartered Surveyors. The sale advert states: "An excellent development opportunity incorporating a plot of 0.4 acres."

INSIDE

PANTOMIME FUN IS PURE GENIE-US

PAGE 5

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CONTENTS

RHODES	6
LETTERS	7
NHS HEROES	15
TICKET	23
TV	26
PUZZLE PAGE	29
MOTORING	38
SPORT	39-40

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Rugby club stalwart's New Year honour

Elfyn with a coaching award

THE driving force behind Willenhall Rugby Club been recognised in the New Year honours list. Elfyn Pugh has been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to the sport.

Mr Pugh has served the club for more than 60 years and his dedication was honoured a year ago when England ruby head coach Eddie Jones presented him with an RFU lifetime achievement award at Twickenham.

The 83-year-old, who received his first major award from the Midland RFU 10 years ago, said: "I thought going to Twickenham was the ultimate accolade but this is a fantastic honour."

Mr Pugh helped find a permanent home for the Willenhall club in Bognop Road, Essington in 1966.

Qualified

He was a player at the time and since then has held every position from fixture secretary to president while also serving on a number of county committees and being chairman of Staffordshire Rugby Union between 2002 and 2004.

He qualified as an RFU Preliminary Award holder in 1970 and coached at schools across the region.

Mr Pugh, who lives in Willenhall, added: "It has been a joy work with a county like Staffordshire but the person who really deserves the award is my wife."

Dedicated community servants are honoured

RESPECTED community figures from all walks of life have been recognised in the Queen's New Year's Honours.

Among them is Alan Tuckett, from the University of Wolverhampton, who has received the most notable recognition. He will collect a knighthood in recognition of his work in developing further education.

University vice chancellor, Professor Geoff Layer said: "Throughout his illustrious career, Professor Sir Alan Tuckett has forged a reputation as 'the voice of adult education' and his work has been dedicated to breaking down barriers enabling adults to access education.

"Forty years after helping to establish the very idea of the 'adult learner' in the 1970s, today he inspires the next generation of educators in his role as professor at the University of Wolverhampton."

Stunned

Unsung heroes were also rewarded for years of hard work, including 96-year-old Derek Elton, who has been involved with the Scouts in Stourbridge from the age of 15.

Mr Elton, who remains president of the Kinver Scout Camp, said: "I was absolutely stunned. But I am delighted." He receives an MBE.

Gordon Evans, chairman of Stafford Town Football Club, receives the British Empire Medal (BEM).

Pauline Hodgetts has strived for 40 years to make her home town Tipton a better place, leading the friends group at Victoria Park and helping to run a sons of rest group allowing pensioners to socialise with friends.

She has been awarded the BEM for services to her community.

She said: "You just carry on on doing things because you really enjoy doing them and then you find out you've been recognised like this. It's absolutely fantastic."

Judith Morris, from Halesowen, is another to have been awarded a BEM for almost 60 years of service with St John Ambulance.

Mrs Morris joined as a cadet in 1959 and worked her way up to become a unit manager. She is now responsible for training up the next generation of lifesavers.

She said: "I didn't expect it at all. It is just an honour to think I have been recognised and appreciated for what I do and the volume of work I do."

Diana Seeney, from Wall Heath, has been honoured for services to the Girls' Brigade. She said: "I am so excited. I was very surprised when I heard about this. I think that when you do volunteering work you don't expect to get recognition for it. So this will be something very special."

The former Mayor of Dudley Steve Waltho, who is a councillor in the town, has been made an MBE for services to local government in the Dudley borough. He said: "I'm deeply honoured, very humbled, I just work for the good of others."

There was also recognition for a giant of industry. Paul Strothers, from Wolverhampton, was former chief executive of aerospace firm Zodiac, which made seats for aeroplanes. He has been awarded an MBE for his work in the industry. David Harcourt was awarded an MBE for services to Stourbridge.

Diana Seeney, MBE, for her work with The Girls Brigade

Derek Elton MBE, right, with Jim Jukes in 2008

Pauline Hodgetts BEM, of Tipton

Councillor Steve Waltho MBE

Judith Morris BEM, of Halesowen

Toys trader saves boys' Christmas after raid

A REAL-LIFE Santa saved Christmas for a mother and her two boys after burglars ransacked their home and stole the children's presents.

The thieves struck on Christmas Eve at the home on the Yew Tree estate while mother-of-two Amy Turley was working a night shift on the cancer ward at Sandwell Hospital, West Bromwich.

After hearing of her plight, Wolverhampton toy shop owner Iain Ashbourne delivered 13 bags of toys for the youngsters in the early hours of Christmas Day. "I couldn't bear to think of them without a present to open," he said.

Chemotherapy nurse Amy returned home to find the house in disarray with £600 worth of gifts under the tree and more hidden upstairs ripped open and taken. Among them were six Lego sets and a light-up scooter. A 50-inch TV set and other items were also stolen.

Mr Ashbourne, owner of Batteries Not Included in the city centre, returned to the shop at midnight to fill his car with toys before delivering them to the Turleys' house. He even brought a gift of bath bombs for Amy. Members of the public also responded by donating gifts.

Divorced Amy, 38, said: "It was amazing. Iain even included wrapping paper and batteries."

Warning over car vandalism

A WARD councillor is warning residents to be on the lookout for vandals after her car window was smashed.

Wednesbury North ward councillor Elaine Costigan is urging residents to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity to police.

She says four roads which have been targeted in Wednesbury. They are Barlow Road, Myvod Road Vicarage Road and Vimy Rod.

Councillor Costigan said: "It's just about making people alert as to what is happening.

"I would advise people to remove anything valuable from view."

Anyone who sees anything suspicious can call police on 101 or Crimestoppers, anonymously on 0800 555111.

Group rambles on at Sandwell Valley

WEST Bromwich Ramblers are heading to Sandwell Valley Country Park on Sunday for a six-mile ramble starting from the Dartmouth Park Main Entrance at 10am. Any non-members are welcome to join the ramble on the day.

For further details call 0121 358 6591.

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Chinese delegation visit crem for pointers

A CHINESE delegation visited Sandwell to learn about the UK's approach to burial and cremation.

It comes as controversial plans for water cremation, earmarked for Rowley Regis crematorium, were put on hold marking a setback for Sandwell Council.

A party from the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs visited Sandwell Valley Crematorium. They were met by Councillor David Hosell, cabinet member for highways and environment.

Councillor Hosell said: "It was a pleasure to welcome delegates from China, who were all experienced senior officials. Given the extensive breadth of excellent services and facilities provided by our bereavement team, the federation felt there was no better place for the delegation to visit to see how this should be delivered."

The delegation was invited by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities.

Rick Powell, secretary and executive officer with the federation, said he was delighted that Sandwell had been willing to host the meeting after he had been asked by the Chinese government to provide a training session.

Delegates wanted to have a better understanding of the approach to laws and regulations, the structure of UK burial and cremation services, codes of practice and service delivery.

Open day date on supported housing

PEOPLE interested in finding out more about a new supported housing scheme in West Bromwich are invited to an open day in January.

The £9.6 million scheme, made up of apartments and bungalows is being built in Oxford Road by Sandwell Council especially for individuals with care or long-term support needs.

Council officers will be on hand at the event, taking place tomorrow, Friday, to talk about the development and answer any enquiries people might have.

The drop-in event is at Goldfield Court, Dartmouth Street, West Bromwich, B70 8BP and runs from 9.30am to 1pm.

For more information visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/oxfordroad

Cash in for hits

SINGER Gus Eyre will be performing some of Johnny Cash's hits during an evening of songs and stories.

The musician will be at Wall Heath Evangelical Free Church in Enville Road on January 13 at 7pm.

Games pool to begin 'within year'

Artist impression of the aquatics centre

WORK on a multi-million pound aquatics centre to host swimming and diving events at the 2022 Commonwealth Games could begin within 12 months. Sandwell Council leader Steve Eling said progress on the facility, which will be built on an as yet unnamed location in the Smethwick area, would gather pace within weeks after Birmingham was confirmed as the host city.

Following the Games, the aquatics centre will act as the main leisure facility in the south of the borough. The cost of the facility has not yet been revealed, with funding likely to be available from the Commonwealth Games organisers and other sporting bodies.

Councillor Eling said: "Plans will now progress for us to build a brand new, state-of-the-art 50-metre pool and create a massive sporting legacy in the Smethwick area. In Sandwell, it gives us a huge regeneration opportunity and we are delighted to be hosting the swimming and diving competitions."

Meanwhile, Commonwealth Games Federation President Louise Martin said cities from Malaysia, Canada and Australia had shown interest in hosting the competition but were judged not to be ready.

But despite facing no competition from overseas and suffering difficulties submitting its own bid, she said Birmingham had 'earned the right' to host the Games. Ms Martin added the Black Country would be part of the 'Games family' and stood to reap the rewards. She said: "Birmingham has earned the right to host the Games. I worked with the team for over nine months and for me it is a Commonwealth city."

Fans raise thousands for mascot's grieving family

THOUSANDS of pounds has been raised for the family of much-loved former Baggies mascot, Richard Eades, who died on Boxing Day, aged just 42.

Richard, from Wednesbury, spent nearly 30 years associated with his beloved Albion, where he became known as the man inside the costume of Baggie Bird's sidekick, Albi.

Richard Eades

Players at Sunday's Premier League clash with Arsenal donned black armbands in his memory after the superfan, who was also a referee with the Birmingham County FA, died just hours before the Boxing Day home fixture against Everton.

More than £2,000 has been donated on a gofundme page where people have also left warm-hearted messages.

A JustGiving page has generated a similar amount.

His family, fiancee Carly and their two children, Lily-Mae, aged eight, and Archie, three, took to the pitch ahead of Sunday's game, which ended 1-1.

Mascots from Villa, Blues, Wolves and Walsall joined Baggie Bird on the Hawthorns pitch to remember him.

And fans held a minute's applause on the 42nd minute with Baggies boss Alan Pardew also seen joining in. An Albion statement said: "News of his passing left all his friends and admirers at The Hawthorns shocked and deeply saddened."

In recognition of his contribution to the cub, Richard was named as fans' champion for the game.

Albion's chief executive officer Martin Goodman said: "It has been a sombre few days for everyone who knew Richard and we wished to pay tribute to a man who was much-loved at the stadium and in return totally devoted to the club."

● Tributes – Back page

Richard's fiancee Carly and young son Archie seen at the West Bromwich Albion game on Sunday

Gangs may be targeting churches

A RISE in metal thefts in Black Country and Staffordshire could be down to organised gangs, claims a specialist insurer.

Specialist insurer Ecclesiastical is encouraging churches and temples to remain vigilant following an increase in thefts.

Figures show there have been 18 metal thefts from temples and churches in Dudley, Walsall and Sandwell last year, up from six the year before. West Midlands Police says it is working closely with churches in a bid to protect them against thieves.

Paul Humphries, a church claims consultant at Ecclesiastical, said the rise in thefts was down partly to the increase in lead prices. He said: "During 2015 we saw an increase in large thefts perpetrated by organised gangs, which involved the removal of entire church roofs.

"This trend continued during 2016 and 2017."

Among the churches targeted last year was Holy Trinity Church, in Burlington Road, West Bromwich.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tearoom boost at country park

VISITORS to Sandwell Valley Country Park will get free access to the award-winning tearooms at Sandwell Park Farm – in a pilot scheme to make visits more enjoyable.

Currently, people wishing to take morning coffee, lunches and afternoon tea at the tearooms have to pay to gain access to the general farm attractions.

But now a special scheme is to be introduced to give people just wishing to visit the tearooms, to get a breakfast buttie or afternoon tea, free access.

This will benefit walkers and families who visit the Valley to walk the footpaths.

Packs to help old people delivered

WINTER warmth packs were handed out to older and vulnerable people in Oldbury and Smethwick to help them through the cold weather.

The special packs contain thermal blankets, hats, gloves, hot water bottle and mugs to help them through the winter months. They also include thermal scarves and socks and dried soup. The 800 packs are targeted to those most in need.

Neighbourhoods chief, Councillor Syeda Khatun, said: "This is a scheme to support older and vulnerable people, helping them to stay warm."

Applause held in tribute to goalie

A MINUTE'S applause was held before Stourbridge FC's fixture against Rushall Olympic, in memory of former Villa and Albion goalkeeper Derek Dudley.

Mr Dudley, of Rugeley, who spent four years at Villa in the 1980s and also played for the Baggies, died on New Year's Eve. His former Baggies teammate Daryl Burgess said: "On this night of joy, please raise a glass for my ex team mate Derek Dudley who sadly passed away earlier today."

Mr Dudley, 47, also used to play for Halesowen Town and Chasetown.

Sweet success for rescue of fingers

A BOY had his fingers stuck in a sweet machine for 20 minutes – before firefighters freed them in time for New Year's Day celebrations.

The child's fingers got lodged in the dispenser of the candy machine at Hot Shots Snooker Club in Crosswells Road in Oldbury on New Year's Eve at 11.20pm.

Firefighters attended and cut open the plastic machine to free the boy's fingers at 11.40pm.

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COUNTY NEWS

Calls con help for sufferers

AN organisation with branches in the West Midlands which works to stop scams is helping people with dementia avoid being conned.

The National Trading Standards Scam Team, a Neighbourhood Watch West Midlands partner, has secured Government funding to provide free call blocking technology to protect those in the most vulnerable circumstances from nuisance and scam calls.

Free call blockers will be available to any person with dementia receiving scam or nuisance calls.

Please note there is a limited number of units available. For details, visit www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk.

City firm teams up with heart charity

A BIRMINGHAM-based research agency has teamed up with a heart charity for 2018 to help raise awareness of common conditions.

BMG Research, based on Greenfield Crescent in Birmingham, has named Heart Research UK as their charity partner for 2018. The company announced the news at their Christmas party, which included a raffle that raised more than £1,000 for the charity.

Heart Research UK, based in Leeds, opened an office in Birmingham in 2007 to support heart patients and local research projects across the Midlands.

Holocaust survivor to give special talk

A HOLOCAUST survivor is set to give people a glimpse into the horrors of the Second World War. Henri Obstfeld will share his story at the University of Wolverhampton.

His visit to the city will come ahead of Holocaust Memorial Day, which will commemorate the millions who died at the hands of the Nazis.

The lecture, which will take place on January 25, will also give guests the chance to quiz Mr Obstfeld about his experience.

Shire horse show to mark 140 years

A SHOW featuring the world's largest gathering of Shire horses will mark its 140th anniversary next year.

The National Shire Horse Show returns to the Staffordshire Showground for the third year in succession, from March 16 to 18.

Adult tickets are £10 in advance or £12 on the gate, while tickets for children aged five to 13 are £8 in advance or £10 on the gate.

Get in the swim for free pool sessions

YOUNG and older people in Sandwell can register for free swimming this winter at any of Sandwell's leisure centres across the borough.

Youngsters aged 16 and under can swim for free during school holidays at any public swimming session at Sandwell leisure centres.

Residents aged 60-plus can also swim for free up to 1pm daily. Free swimming is available to all Sandwell residents who meet the criteria and people need to register and provide proof of address. Those already registered can continue to use their existing free swim cards.

Sandwell Council has signed up to the free swimming initiative for a number of years.

Cabinet member Councillor Paul Moore said: "Our free swimming programme is incredibly popular and we are always getting lots of great feedback from residents who love the fact that they can swim for free in Sandwell.

"It is incredibly important to us as a council to help people keep active and we hope to continue to offer free swimming for children and people aged 60-plus in Sandwell."

Ash Rai, chief executive for Sandwell Leisure Trust said: "We are delighted to support Sandwell Council's free swimming initiative to help more people enjoy swimming at our excellent pool facilities throughout the borough."

Mike Wells, contracts manager for Places for People, said: "We are happy to continue to support Sandwell Council's free swimming initiative."

For further details and registration visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/leisure

Does the bell toll for risqué street name?

Report by Peter Madeley

IT'S the Black Country street that is sure to bring a smile to the faces of those with a juvenile sense of humour.

But the infamous Bell End in Rowley Regis could become a thing of the past after a petition was launched to change its name.

A campaign says residents of the street have become a 'laughing stock' thanks to the double entendre name, with children who live there bullied and teased at school.

A statement accompanying the change.org petition, entitled Bell End Road Name Change, says: "As you may be aware, the term Bell End can be seen and used as a rude and/or a offensive word. As well as this, it can affect people, including children being bullied and teased at school and generally now become a laughing stock as seen very recently on Facebook.

Travelled

"We want the local Sandwell Council to acknowledge our name change request to a new road name and at the very least to a similar name."

The petition, by the anonymous campaigner, suggests changing the street's name to Bell Road. Bell End – which leads onto Mincing Lane – has become so well known over the years that people have travelled from outside the area to have their picture taken with the sign.

Rowley Regis councillor Barbara Price said she could understand residents' concerns. "If some people find the name offensive and children are being teased about where they live then there is obviously an issue," she said.

But Bell End resident Councillor Chris Tranter claims the name should not be changed. He said: "I was born here and lived here for 40 years and it doesn't bother me. You get the odd giggle on the phone, it is quite amusing really."

Oh baby! It's a wedding to remember

Proud parents Dannie and Carl with newborn baby Jasmine

A PREGNANT bride's wedding day became extra special after she went into labour at her reception.

Dannie Mountford, from Rowley Regis was 36 weeks and two days pregnant when she tied the knot on December 18. Having planned the wedding in just six weeks, Dannie and husband Carl were convinced that their little girl wouldn't arrive until her due date in January.

However at their evening reception, held at Hot Shots in Langley, while still wearing her wedding dress, Dannie's waters broke while she was dancing with her new husband.

Dannie was then rushed to City Hospital and gave birth to baby Jasmine in the early hours of the following day. Dannie, 19, said: "One second I was dancing with my new husband, and the next I was giving birth to my little girl.

"It was such a big surprise, but it's made our wedding day even more memorable.

"As I was dancing I felt something coming trickling down my leg, and when it didn't stop I ran over to my mum who helped me to the toilet.

"Whilst I was in the toilet all of the wedding guests were coming in to check on me and someone booked me a taxi to the hospital.

"We hadn't even cut the cake yet. Luckily Carl wasn't drinking much at the reception and he'd stayed relatively sober. Despite weighing only 6lbs 4oz, and arriving almost a month early, Jasmine is doing really well."

Car crashes into post as services are kept busy

A SUSPECTED drink-driver crashed into a lamp post leaving the car precariously balancing on two wheels before fleeing the scene on foot.

It was one of several incidents which kept emergency services busy as the new year was ushered in.

The collision happened shortly before 9.39pm on New Year's Eve in Great Barr.

The black BMW found itself wedged on a lamp post situated in the grassed central reservation area of the Newton Road near the junction with Waddington Avenue.

A West Midlands Police spokesman said: "At 9.39pm we received a 999 call to a collision on Newton Road. It was a one-car collision. The vehicle was left wedged on a lamp post.

"It was a suspected drink-driver who made off from the scene. We have a description of the male and we are making enquiries to try and trace them."

Two crews from West Bromwich fire station also attended to make the scene safe.

Earlier the same day police were called to incident in Cannock Chase where a car had left the road and rolled down an embankment on to its roof.

Miraculously no-one was injured.

At 1.20pm on New Year's Eve Cannock Police took to its Twitter feed to urge drivers to be careful uploading a picture of the aftermath.

They said: "A reminder to drive carefully, especially in inclement weather conditions.

"Thankfully no injuries reported from this incident over the holiday period! – TW."

Chiefs in pledge on A&E targets

HEALTH chiefs claim the Manor Hospital will hit national A&E waiting time targets by June after failing to reach the benchmark for more than two years.

Not since May 2015 have hospital chiefs ensured that 95 per cent of patients were dealt with within the required four hours.

But a "Walsall Vision for Emergency and Urgent Care" aims that it will indeed be back to the requirement this summer by introducing a raft of measures. However the Manor is already underperforming against targets in the plan.

The aim was for the hospital to be hitting a 90 per cent success rate by last September but despite recent improvement it has not managed above 87 per cent this year.

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Appeal on pioneering headteacher in Smethwick

A CAMPAIGN has been launched to chart the life of a teacher believed to be Britain's first black headmaster – 50 years after his historic appointment.

Tony O'Connor became the head of Bearwood Primary School in Smethwick, West Midlands, in 1967 and said he did not care if he was the "first, second, third or 250th West Indian headmaster".

At the time he was aged 45, and Mr O'Connor was featured in The Times newspaper. He said: "I am only interested in carrying out the instructions of the Education Committee which appointed me – to take care of the school and the education of the children."

Newspaper reports from 1967 described how racist graffiti and swastikas were daubed on the walls of the school after the ex-RAF serviceman was chosen to take charge.

Former Smethwick councillor and local historian David Hallam is now appealing for help to chronicle Mr O'Connor's achievements and arrange for a plaque to be put up marking the groundbreaking appointment.

Appealing for relatives and former pupils of Mr O'Connor to get in touch, Mr Hallam said: "Tony O'Connor proved to be a very popular head teacher and stayed for 16 years.

"His story should be told. He overcame bigotry and did much to improve race relations in the area."

Details of the campaign can be found at https://www.facebook.com/TonyOConnorCommemorativePage

Cycling Santas caught on M-way

TWO worse for wear cyclists were collared by police officers as they made their way down a busy motorway in Santa hats on Christmas Day.

Traffic officers caught up with the cyclists riding along the M5 northbound between Junctions 6 and 5.

Both cyclists were said to be 'rather intoxicated' when they were removed from the carriageway by Central Motorway Police Group (CMPG) officers. But they weren't the only people caught on the motorway. An 'intoxicated male' walking not far from the cyclists was 'helped' by firearms officers, while three woman were spotted walking on the M5 and removed.

Tribute to Weller

A PAUL Weller tribute act heads to Bilsto's Robin 2 next week. The Modfathers will take to the stage on January 13, from 7.30pm. Tickets are £10 in advance or £12 on the door. Call 01902 401211 or visit therobin.co.uk

First glimpse at new 750-pupil school

Impression of how the school would look

THIS image shows how a new school for 750 pupils in Weest Bromwich could look.

The academy is set to be built on playing fields in Kelvin Way, near the M5. Education chiefs are planning to welcome the first pupils in September 2019.

They insist a new secondary school is badly needed to help serve the rising demand for places in the area.

Artist's impressions show a modern-looking main building, flanked by a car park, trees and green space. Documents submitted to Sandwell Council with the plans revealed the school would be built in two phases, initially opening to children in Years 7 and 8 before welcoming older children later.

Sponsor

A sports hall and sports pitches would also be part of the development.

Council leaders are keen to get the school built as quickly as possible to ensure it is ready for 2019.

It needs the backing of a sponsor before it goes ahead and will not be run by the authority.

However, there is a potential for the scheme to run into difficulty.

Previous plans for an industrial park on the playing field ended up being scrapped due to the level of objections locally.

Education chiefs have sought to ease any concerns over the land by confirming part of the playing fields would remain.

Bosses have also revealed plans for the school itself to be opened up for the entire community.

Vow to tackle rise of attacks on NHS staff

HEALTH bosses have declared a rise in attacks on NHS staff in Sandwell as 'completely unacceptable'.

Staff at GP practices have suffered physical assaults, verbal abuse and intimidation from patients.

Official figures say four incidents are taking place each month across sites in Sandwell and West Birmingham.

Michelle Carolan, deputy chief officer for quality at NHS Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "It is completely unacceptable that staff suffer violence and abuse from people they are trying to help.

"We can confirm that the current trend of violence and aggression incidents in GP practices in Sandwell and West Birmingham reflects an ongoing and long-standing national trend.

"Locally, a total of four incidents on average are reported per month, which can range from actual physical assaults on members of staff to verbal harassment or intimidating behaviour.

"We will continue to take strong action to protect NHS staff from suffering unacceptable violence or abuse by patients or relatives."

Trend

The CCG said there had been a 'low level trend' since it started in 2013 but had noticed an 'upturn' in reports the following year. There are 96 GP practices under the authority of Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG, which serves around 530,000 people.

Preet Gill, Birmingham Edgbaston MP and former Sandwell councillor, said the safety of doctors and nurses needed to be ensured. But she also called on the CCG to provide more clarification over the data.

Ms Gill said: "None of our public service staff when carrying out their duty should be at risk or threat from any member of the public.

"It would be helpful if the CCG put the data into some form of context, such as has there been a spike in attacks?, what are the circumstances and factors behind them?

"We need to get a better understanding of the data in order to ensure that we are prioritising the safety of doctors and patients."

Entertainment definitely rubs off

George Clayton (Wishee Washee), Natalie Forbes-Moore (Aladdin), Fiona Robinson (Princess Jasmine)

IT'S Panto time again at Oldbury Rep and it will be the story of Aladdin entertaining audiences.

Written and directed by rep member Ian Thompson, the action takes place in far off lands, with a host of colourful characters, including of course, the genie, Widow Twanky and the evil Abanazar. Press officer Alan Wood said: "Be prepared for a few surprises in our fun filled family panto at Oldbury Rep."

The production runs from Friday January 12 until Saturday 20 with matinees on January 13, 14 and 20. There is no performance on the Wednesday and organisers say the show is not recommended for children under three.

Evening performances start at 7.30pm and matinees at 2.30pm.

Tickets can be obtained by phone or in person from the box office on Monday evenings from 7.30pm, and on the Thursday prior to opening night from 7.30pm, and at every performance.

Tickets are £11 with the usual concessions and party bookings at £10.

The box office can be contacted on 0121 552 2761. And you can now book online at www.oldburyrep.org

NEWS IN BRIEF

Armed raiders rob pensioners

ROBBERS armed with a knife attacked two pensioners in their own home. The masked men barged into the Lower Gornal house, injuring their victims before making off on foot with jewellery.

CCTV cameras on a neighbour's property captured the two attackers running away from the scene last Wednesday. West Midlands Police said that officers were alerted to the incident just after 7.30pm.

The two raiders assaulted a man and woman, both aged in their early-70s, before taking the jewellery.

Force spokesman Craig Hughes said: "The victims were left shaken and taken to hospital with minor injuries. House-to-house inquiries are being carried out."

Cannabis factory found near school

A CANNABIS factory has been discovered at a house close to a school in Great Barr. Police found 70 plants after initially heading to reports of a burglary at the property.

Inside the house, in Wilderness Lane, officers found the major operation producing the class B drug.

The home is near Q3 Academy, formerly Dartmouth High School. Police said that the whole house had been converted and was a 'real fire risk and accident waiting to happen'.

A police spokesman said: "When officers arrived they found a cannabis factory with around 70 plants inside. There have been no arrests."

Burglary victims are likely targets

BURGLARY victims in the West Midlands are two and a half times more likely to be targeted again, according to a new study.

The data, from Co-op Insurance, also found that people were so nervous of strangers approaching the door, many only answered if they were sure it was a friend or relative.

The claims data reveals that victims are often targeted again around 16 months after the first break- in.

Co-op's claims data also highlights that home break-ins are 43 per cent more likely to occur in November and December, in comparison to the summer months.

Plumes of smoke with shopping centre blaze

FIREFIGHTERS tackled a severe blaze at a shopping centre in Perry Barr. Plumes of smoke could be seen coming from the back of the One Stop shop just before 5pm last Thursday. Four crews from Aston, Perry Barr and Handsworth attended.

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GGF

IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

So Ringo what have you done to merit this?

A GREATER mind than mine is needed to work this one out. Back in 1965, when Beatlemania was at its height, Ringo Starr was appointed an MBE, along with the rest of his bandmates.

In 1970, when The Beatles finally broke up having released their final album there were no further honours, presumably because the MBEs were thought to suffice.

Paul McCartney was given a knighthood in 1997, but nothing more for Starr, presumably because the MBE was still considered sufficient. Indeed, there was no mention of him in the Queen's birthday honours, and that was only six months ago. Nor in the previous New Year's honours list or the one for David Cameron's resignation, four months earlier.

So Ringo's honour is obviously for something he has achieved since June last year, something that completely eclipses his work with The Beatles. Perhaps somebody can tell me what it is?

❒❒❒

DAVID Beckham reveals that at times of stress, he plays with Lego to help him relax. Which reminds me of a joke dating back to his playing days, when the midfielder asked the then Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson for help with a jigsaw.

"Boss, boss, you've gotta help me," he shouted nervously. "I wanted to show Victoria I am not thick, that I can do a jigsaw puzzle, but it's so hard."

Looking slightly confused, Ferguson asked Beckham where the puzzle was.

"It's here boss, it's meant to be a cockerel, but no matter how I arrange all the pieces, it doesn't look right."

Ferguson sighed wearily, and placed a fatherly hand on Beckham's shoulder.

"David, David, son," he said. "Just put the cornflakes back in the box."

❒❒❒

EXCITING news from the Government, which is spending millions to ensure all mainline trains have "superfast wi-fi connectivity". Apparently, this means every passenger will be able to watch videos at the same time, which is great news for ticket inspectors who will have to interrupt every passenger from their viewing.

Can you imagine anything more hateful? Whole carriages of people lost in their own little world, a cacophony of whistling noises emanating from the headphones like tinnitus for anybody not wishing to participate. The work involves laying hundreds of miles of fibre-optic cables alongside the tracks, so you can imagine the disruption.

Call me a luddite, but wouldn't you prefer the money was spent on a bit of real "connectivity", like reopening some of the railway lines around the Black Country?

From fake news and Bake Off to the TV licence fee

Donald Trump – if somebody takes a pot-shot will guards shout: "Donald, duck!"

Gary Lineker – takes TV licence fees from more than 15,000 homes to employ him

The Krankies – reader asks: "After Scottish independence, who gets custody of them?"

Annual line-up: So who can Trump this?

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

ANOTHER year is almost over. My thanks to all readers, especially those of you whose contributions enlivened this column in 2017.

Here's a selection of snippets month-by-month recalling a year of everything from fake news to Bake Off, cold snaps and the TV licence fee.

JANUARY: A reader asks, if somebody takes a pot-shot at President Trump, will the bodyguards shout: "Donald, duck!"

FEBRUARY: The Government says old folk occupying big houses will be "given incentives" to move into smaller properties. A reader asks: "Will the same criteria apply to the stately piles of England: Buckingham Palace,Windsor Castle and Clarence House?" Any more questions like that, my lad, and you'll find yourself in a very large dwelling. The Tower.

MARCH: A reader inquires: "After Scottish independence, who gets custody of the Krankies?"

APRIL: Still on religion, Easter eggs and suchlike, a reader points out that there is no such person as the Archbishop of Cadbury.

MAY: A reader writes: "Historians have revealed that they may have found the location in Suffolk where St Edmund is buried. It is thought to be in the town of Bury St Edmunds. How much do these people earn, and where do I apply for a job?"

JUNE: The unspeakable leader. The official election leaflet has just arrived from our local Labour candidate. It contains not a single mention of Jeremy Corbyn.

JULY: If you haven't done the sums yet, it takes the TV licence fees from more than 15,000 homes to employ Gary Lineker at the BBC for a year.

AUGUST: A close look at the neo-Nazi marchers in Charlottesville reveals the usual snarling, dead-eyed losers you see at any far-right gathering. Whenever you meet the Master Race, it's always a disappointment.

SEPTEMBER: Prue Leith, the Bake Off judge, pins the blame on our "centrally heated houses and sedentary lifestyle" for contributing to obesity. Nothing to do with all those cakes, then?

OCTOBER: Is anyone else surprised that, while the weather forecasters queued up to explain why the sky had turned orange a few days ago, no-one warned us in advance that it was going to happen? Not so much forecasting as aftcasting.

NOVEMBER: If Moscow really is planting fake news to bring down the West, expect it to be a well-concealed operation. You know how it is. You open one Russian troll and there's another troll inside .

DECEMBER: Hell's teeth. If this cold weather continues we babyboomers in our huge palaces may be forced to spend our winter fuel allowance on winter fuel. That was never the plan.

So that was the year, that was. And now for some snippets to kick off 2018 . . .

ALL hail the new blue passport, the visible symbol of the UK finally divorced from the EU. In the great scheme of things, the colour of a document that most of us use only once or twice a year may seem insignificant. But such things matter, if only to reassure 17 million voters that HMS Brexit, having been tied to the EU quayside in miles of red tape for the past 18 months, is about to set sail.

CASTLE Lodge in Ludlow is one of the quirkiest old buildings I've ever visited, probably because it is privately owned and occupied and there's a strange sense of intruding into somebody's secret world. So good luck to the £500,000 appeal to acquire and restore it, although I understand the sentiments of a reader who declares: "Food banks in every town – and yet another old building takes precedence!" The point is that if every old-building appeal were wound up tomorrow, the money would still not alleviate poverty. Now that we have hundreds of them, food banks, like the poor, will always be with us. As long as some people are happy to collect and distribute food to the less well-off and and other people are grateful to accept it, the food banks will endure. It is pointless and insulting to regard them as a national disgrace.

A CROSS-party group of MPs says travellers who set up illegal camps should be forced to pay for the cost of cleaning up any mess they leave behind. Good luck with that. I have a mental image of a determined and stern-faced MP handing a bill to one such family and inexplicably ending up with an even bigger bill for 50 yards of asphalt he never wanted.

TALKING POINT

What's this obsession with TV and smuggling?

FOR some reason the subject of smuggling has suddenly become a hot topic and not just in the stories which make the news these days. Take a recent weekend's TV schedules for example.

First we had Sir Tony "Time Team" Robinson in Cornwall with his Walking Through History, and he was determined to dig up all the facts he could on smuggling there.

It was an interesting insight into a precarious but lucrative industry, but blow me down, who was this in hot pursuit of the Time Team man? Only one of the West Midlands' finest. Coastal Railways with Julie Walters was an affectionate trip along scenic routes. And aside from wallowing in the Cornish scenery, she was equally happy poking about for clues to how smugglers operated.

Then just as we thought there was nothing more to be said about the subject, up pops the least likely of smuggling fans in Penelope Keith's Coastal Villages. In an attempt to outrun Robinson and Walters, she headed for the Isle of Wight and West Sussex where, to quote Channel 4, she "becomes immersed in stories of seafarers, smugglers and shipwrecks".

Despite the lawlessness of the subject, all three programmes portrayed those ruthless gangs of long ago in a romantic light. And there is something to be said about the thrill of sneaking past the authorities. I was nervous as hell when smuggling my cassette recorder into open-air festivals to obtain what I reckoned would be highly sought-after bootleg tapes of the likes of Pink Floyd and Thin Lizzy.

Only trouble was, my primitive machine made the bands sound like they were playing in a tunnel, and picked up every utterance of the people around me.

Years later, having come straight from work, I had more success taking a tuna sandwich into a football match, despite warning notices at the turnstiles saying only food and drink bought at the kiosks could be consumed inside the stadium.

Of course, there is a very serious side to smuggling, as in the court case where several people were jailed for using drones to get drugs and phones to prison inmates. But sometimes you have to smile at the audacity of some people. I was once in a cinema, waiting for the film to start, when a couple extracted from a carrier bag a flask, sandwiches and for all I know a dessert, and had a real feast. And what had I brought with me? A bottle of tap water from home, just to avoid paying the exorbitant prices in the foyer.

Sometimes, it's best just to be brazen . . . and prepare a convincing excuse for when you're nabbed! STEVE PARLETT

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More honesty needed by trust CEOs

YOUR front page on the money being paid in compensation and litigation by hospital trusts due to clinical negligence doesn't address the underlying causes.

Some negligence claims involve compensatory awards to help the claimant adjust their lives to their disabilities arising from the hospitals' negligence. However, many millions are wasted on unnecessary legal fees defending the reputation of a hospital, or its executive officers.

I lost a granddaughter at one such hospital in recent years and we witnessed the dreadful conditions that led to her sad demise. But we were met with a solid wall of denial by executive officers, despite what we, as a family, had witnessed, they offered meaningless platitudes and obduracy.

No one in the family wanted to sue the NHS, but in order to get to the truth and help prevent similar occurrences, litigation became the only option. Millions could be saved if trust CEOs could be honest with complainants rather than cover things up.

JOHN DAVENPORT
Wolverhampton

Claiming PPI may cost us

ANYONE claiming for a Payment Protection Insurance (PPI) refund should be aware that even if you paid this insurance and were unaware, not told, or misled, you still cannot claim even if you have proof. In certain cases the 'no-win, no-fee' policy only works if the company/bank etc applied the insurance themselves.

If the PPI was issued by, say, a broker for the company/bank/mortgage lender you cannot claim a single penny back, even if you can prove you paid the PPI with receipts, bank statements, payment statements from that company itself.

You cannot claim if the company has ceased trading, been taken over. The (Broker) is not liable! The PPI system and the broker has scammed you. So beware the PPI refund system – it could cost you money.

DEREK GRIFFITHS
Wolverhampton

Obey rules of yellow lined boxes

JUST got back from shopping at Asda in Pearson Street, Brierley Hill.

I would have been a lot quicker and a lot less stressed if road users understood or obeyed the rule of the criss-crossed boxes at junctions.

As I approached the lights at the junction of Venture Way and Mill Street the lights were on green but because cars had pulled into the box I couldn't go anywhere.

The lights changed back to red for me and traffic moved but when they had changed back to green a bus had come along and pulled up at the bus stop just round the corner.

All the traffic coming up from Merry Hill followed it so again I was unable to move.

I finally moved at the third green light.

The rule is if you cannot exit the box immediately on the other side do not enter it.

JENNY JAMES
Wordsley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
Sandwell Chronicle,
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EMAIL
sandwell.chronicle@expressandstar.co.uk

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Opinion should not be stated as a fact

I FEEL when a contributor presents an opinion as fact then they should be able to offer a link of some sort, to a respected website maybe? Because if this opinion is misleading then surely every part of the letter should be taken with a pinch of salt.

Pauline Poole gave us that opinion, suggesting that millions are lost when a city is granted European City of Culture status, and it would take years to repay the debt.

So, with a little research, I found out Liverpool replied to an FOI request with this statement – cost £36m, gain to the city overall £800m. With 3.5 millions visiting first time, and a large number of events, it appears that Liverpool City Council seem quite happy with the idea overall.

PAUL NOBLE
Wolverhampton

Phillips at an all time low

AT the end of an ITN news article about Damian Green's departure we saw Jess Phillips giving us the benefit of her smirking know-all verdict. The Yardley MP has become the first port of call for reporters .

Perhaps they hope for a repeat of her interview in the Huffington Post where she told of how she dealt with another blowhard pseudo-feminist, Diane Abbott. MPs have had a bad name for years but she has taken them to an all-time low.

TREVOR HOWARD
Wolverhampton

Sandwell age UK

New Year Opening

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Wednesday	17th 24th 31st Jan 10:30-12:30	Craft Group
Thursday	18th 25th Jan 13:00-15:00	Digital Cafe
Thursday	18th 25th Jan 13:00-15:00	Art Group
Thursday	18th 25th Jan 10:30-12:30	Benefit Advice
Thursday	18th Jan 13:00-15:00	Healthwatch Advice
Monday	12th Feb 13:00-15:00	Free Film Event

For more information please call 0121 314 4526
or visit www.ageuksandwell.org.uk
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Registered charity number 1080517

Stage set as Dame Dennis faces up to pantomime role

SHE'S a familiar face to many as possibly the longest serving black pantomime dame in the country.

Now, Dennis Ffrench is due to take to the stage this weekend as part of a Beauty and the Beast pantomime production at a Wolverhampton theatre.

The performance, which was due to take place before Christmas, was rescheduled due to the snow and is now due to take place on Sunday at Newhampton Arts Centre.

Dennis, who is from West Bromwich and now lives in Burntwood, Staffordshire, is already preparing for the role, donning his panto costume complete with sultry red lipstick, polka-dot white and red dress and of course the stylish white hair bow and stripy socks.

Dennis Ffrench with co-star Rebecca Shepherd from Oxley

West Bromwich-born Dennis Ffrench

Career

In the production, delivered by Working Theatre, Dennis plays the comedic role of Ding Dong Bell – Beauty's fictitious mother in Working Theatre company's interpretation of the classic story.

Dennis started his career as a dame back in 1995, after taking on the role following a stint as the much more serious Macbeth.

Dennis, who describes himself as a character actor, said: "I was used to performing strong, masculine characters. So to get the offer of becoming a pantomime dame was very different for me.

"But I wanted to challenge myself and the stereotypes surrounding male black actors."

His first role as a dame saw him take on the character Hettie Hawkins in an interpretation of classic Treasure Island.

He said: "When I first performed as a dame, people weren't used to seeing a black male actor on stage, let alone one dressed as a pantomime woman!"

A gifted sportsman, Dennis found himself making a choice between competing as an athlete or heading into the performing arts.

After making the decision to become an actor, he joined the then West Midlands Arts company in Moseley, Birmingham, and was one of the people selected out of 100 to work with them to create a theatre company.

Third Dimension Theatre company was the company that Dennis helped to form in 1986 before going on to be freelance in 1990.

Eventually, he joined ZIP Theatre Company based in Wolverhampton in 1996 and toured extensively around the UK before joining Working Theatre most recently in 2013.

Dennis said: "Over the years the audience has grown with me and expects more from me.

The most challenging role Dennis has played over the years was one he took on last year in Working Theatre's production of The Wizard of Oz.

Dennis said: "That was hard work because I played three characters in that production – the Wicked Witch of the West, the Good Fairy and the Wizard himself. To go from playing an evil witch to the opposite, a wholly good character, to a conflicted character like the Wizard was a real test, but very satisfying to perform."

The industry has changed significantly during Dennis' time in the business.

He said: "When I first started it was about challenging people's stereotypes about what black male actors could be and what parts they could play.

"It was impossible to get roles. There were many parts that weren't deemed appropriate for black men to play.

"But becoming the dame has given me a unique selling point and enabled me to have a long and successful career.

Audience

"I can bring cultural references into my performance which really makes audiences respond and get where the character is coming from. I could never have done that years ago.

"Now, the audience accepts me and don't see colour. It's about the role I play, the character and their uniqueness, not me."

Dennis is taking to the stage in Working Theatre's production of Beauty and the Beast on Sunday, at Newhampton Arts Centre, Dunkley Street, Wolverhampton from 1pm and 3pm. Tickets cost £8 for adults and £6 for children.

For more information and for tickets, visit http://www.newhamptonarts.co.uk/beauty-and-the-beast-panto/ or call 01902 572 090.

Hospital's opening to be year late

SANDWELL'S new £350 million 'super hospital' will be completed almost a year later than originally planned.

The Midland Metropolitan Hospital has been hit with several delays since construction started in Smethwick.

Construction giant Carillion, which is building the hospital, has now admitted work will not be completed until the end of June 2019 – 11 months later than was originally planned.

The Midland Met

The latest setback means the opening of the huge new hospital has again been put back.

'Engineering difficulties' – mostly the fitting of pipes and wiring – have been one of the main reasons for the delay. Sandwell health chiefs said they were working to 'identify and understand the impact and consequences of the delay'.

The Midland Met was originally due to open in autumn 2018 but, to the frustration of NHS trust chiefs, had to be put back by six months to spring 2019.

At the time Toby Lewis, chief executive of the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust, which will run the new hospital, insisted he was confident it would be the only delay on the project rather than 'the first of several'. But it will now be the middle of summer before building work on the hospital is complete.

When the Midland Met does open, it will become the main hospital in the borough, with services at Sandwell General and City Hospital to be scaled down. The latest delay comes following months of crisis at Wolverhampton firm Carillion, but trust bosses have insisted there is no risk of the Midland Met not being completed.

Knight behind the scenes at panto

Soul star Beverley Knight as the fairy godmother with co-star Gary Watson as Dandini

SOUL star Beverley Knight took to social media to give fans a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the world of panto.

The Wolverhampton-born singer and star of the stage gave fans an exclusive backstage view of her pantomime debut Cinderella as she took over the Birmingham Hippodrome Instagram account.

Miss Knight got hashtag heavy for the account's 5,045 followers as she posted her way through the many stages of the show – in which she plays the fairy godmother.

The 44-year-old uploaded pictures and videos from behind the scenes of the production to the Instagram account.

One post shows Sunsanne Shaw as Cinderella, Matt Slack as Buttons, and Gary Watson as Dandini with Miss Knight for the vocal warm-up.

The pantomime, which also stars celebrities such as Danny Mac, Matt Slack and The Grumbleweeds, runs until Sunday, January 28.

Almost £1.6m aid to hospital charities

TWO hospital charities have received almost £1.6 million through fundraising, donations and legacies in 12 months.

The money has been used to benefit patients and staff through a variety of projects in Sandwell and Dudley. The registered charity for Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals – Your Trust Charity – raised £1,246,000.

By Heather Large

The figure was reached from April 2016 to March 2017 and was more than double the previous year, which charity staff said was due to a significant increase in legacy income.

Johnny Shah, head of Your Trust Charity, said: "We are so grateful to the fantastic generosity of our donors, with legacies in particular helping us to fund 13 new projects of almost £400,000 from our grants programme.

"This helps us to enhance the experience of our patients and their families accessing our services, over and above NHS statutory funding."

Projects funded included The Sapphire Project, which was carried out with Agewell CIC and West Bromwich African Caribbean Care Centre.

This aimed to bridge the gap from hospital to home for older and vulnerable people, helping them to live independently and avoid repeated admissions.

Another scheme saw the charity run taster sessions in gardening, cooking and healthy eating awareness for staff, patients and the public.

Mr Shah added: "Although we have had a very successful year for fundraising, there is so much more we need to do, especially as 2018 will mark the launch of our £2m public appeal for our new Midland Metropolitan Hospital."

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The business moved to its present base 26 years ago. Carera offer a full range of windows and doors and also install a full range of conservatories, orangeries and living spaces.

Happy

The company prides itself on having a depth of knowledge in all aspects of the products it offers and industry regulations. The company is fully conversant with all current regulations within the industry. A key aim is to provide a level of customer service that is second to none. More than 70 per cent of all Carera Windows' home sales come via personal recommendation from happy clients, which number many thousands. It takes pride in completing every project to the highest standard.

From the start, Carera is committed to offering only top-quality products, expert installations and unbeatable personal service to both private and commercial customers. Its experienced team is committed to working closely with local authorities, education authorities, landlords, architects and contractors on its commercial work. Carera Windows is keen to get involved in any kind of commercial project from industrial units to office conversions, new build to refurbishments and renovations.

The company's showroom at its base is open Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm and Saturday, 10am to 4pm. It offers a wide range of products in various sizes and colours, manufactured using PVCu, aluminium, GRP and hardwood. Carera also installs entrance doors, sliding patio doors, french double doors and porches

Carera Windows was started by owner and managing director Mark Crumpton in 1989, originally from home as a small enterprising double glazing company supplying the local area. Its housing association glazing contracts and commercial premises work now also takes the business across the country.

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Carera Windows has fitted more than half a million quality windows and doors

Carera prides itself on offering honest and professional expert advice

City's 'vertical village'

An artist's impression of 2one2 Broad Street

PLANNERS have given the green light for a city's tallest apartment building. Standing 42 storeys high in Broad Street, Birmingham, it will come complete with a 200-metre running track on its roof.

The £182 million scheme, dubbed 2one2 Broad Street, will be built on the site of the former Tramps' nightclub and provide 481 apartments for rent.

Developer Moda has described the tower as a new 'vertical village' for Birmingham.

The hi-tech development will connect residents to their apartments through a digital app.

Moda, which develops and runs homes for rent, says it secured unanimous planning permission from Birmingham City Council in just 12 minutes.

Business break-ins spark rise in patrols

CASH, charity boxes and stock have been stolen while hundreds of pounds worth of damage has been caused in a spate of business break-ins to hit Walsall town centre.

By Carl Jackson

West Midlands Police confirmed there had been 17 similar incidents in December alone. While detectives have not formally linked the cases they have identified a pattern.

They stated that company premises have been targeted on Monday and Tuesdays in particular with multiple incidents on Ablewell Street and Bridge Street.

The force has stepped up patrols in the town centre.

Police stated that in the majority of incidents the thieves either failed to gain entry or left empty-handed but they have provided details of five break-ins where the culprits were successful.

The first burglary took place at handmade ironwork manufacturer Kirkpatrick on Charles Street, between Monday night, December 4, and the following morning.

The thieves cut the locks to the main building activating the alarm and broke into the shed and shower block stealing staff clothing. Then between the night of Friday, December 8, and the next morning, Hearnshaws Carpets and Curtains on Stafford Street was targeted. The culprits smashed a window with a brick and stole a rug. Other targets which followed were True Blue Beauty Salon, Rosedene Rescue Centre and Argos Clearance Bargains outlet, where the most recent incident at Co-operative Bank, where a number of charity boxes were stolen.

Kevin Pitt, police, engagement and consultation officer for Walsall, said: "If you have any information which may assist police investigations please contact the police on 101."

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Hospital parking charges bring in more than £2m

MORE than £2m was made in parking charges by the health trust which runs Sandwell General Hospital in one year, figures show.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, which also runs Rowley Regis Hospital, took in £2.4m in the last financial year.

Of that amount £1.7m came from patients and visitors, with £730,077 coming from staff charges. It is up from £2.3 the year before. The trust also made £11,000 in fines, up from £2,000 in 2015/16.

Parking at Sandwell General costs £2.80 for up to an hour to £5.30 for up to 24 hours. At Rowley Regis is costs £2.80 for up to six hours and £5.30 for up to 24 hours.

The total compares to £3.6m made by University Hospitals of North Midlands, which runs County Hospital in Stafford, and £2.3m made by The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, which runs New Cross Hospital.

Revenue

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, which runs Walsall Manor Hospital, raked in £1.1m and Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, which runs Russells Hall Hospital, made £471,000, but most the revenue taken by a private finance initiative firm.

Shadow health secretary Jonathan Ashworth said: "Hospital parking charges are an entirely unfair and unnecessary burden."

Rachel Power, chief executive of the Patients Association, said: "For patients, parking charges amount to an extra charge for being ill. The increase in the number charging for disabled parking is particularly concerning.

"Patients who require disabled parking may have little choice but to access their care by car. Targeting them in this way feels rather cynical."

Furniture site hit by arson

The fire seen at its height at the Smethwick furniture factory site

A HUGE blaze which badly damaged a furniture factory is now being treated as arson. Heartlands Furniture Wholesale Ltd in Cranford Street, Smethwick, went up in flames on Thursday night.

Around 40 firefighters were called to the blaze, which dominated the 10,000 sq ft storage building.

Over the weekend investigations have continued into the cause of the blaze, with West Midlands Fire Service passing the matter on to the police. Teams from both agencies were at the site on Saturday and Sunday, inspecting the damage for clues.

The factory is located around 200m from the Midland Met Hospital, which is under construction. Managing director of the firm, Saleem Shareef, said stock had been lost in the blaze, which started at 8.32pm. It was extinguished on Friday morning.

Emergency services at the site

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Historic gas showroom is demolished

The demolished gas showroom site off High Street in West Bromwich which will take its place at the museum

A picture of the building from years gone by

The building seen in its latter years, cordoned off

IT stood on the High Street for three quarters of a century but the famous West Bromwich Gas Showroom has now vanished from view. But it won't be long before the landmark building reappears – five miles away at the Black Country Living Museum.

The old showroom, which became run-down having been derelict for years, has been knocked down, altering the look of the High Street, with sections to be brought back to life at the famous attraction.

Museum bosses were keen to get their hands on the building to add to its impressive list of iconic buildings from years gone by. The showroom dates back to the 1940s and was a prominent feature of the town centre.

Council chiefs in Sandwell also wanted rid of the old showroom, which they feared could pose a danger due to its crumbling state, and will now look to develop that part of the High Street. The Gas Showroom is expected to form part of the museum's new 1950s and 60s town, which will be created over the next five years as part of a multi-million pound expansion at the attraction.

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Ross hopes to drum up support for solo single

FROM West Bromwich to LA – drummer Ross Harris has worked alongside some of the hottest pop stars and is now on track to find stardom as a solo artist.

The musician has toured with the likes of Busted, Ella Henderson and Craig David over the past few years.

And it's fair to say that he has been come quite a way since his days attending Sandwell Youth Music – which he says he owes a lot to.

He has now released his debut track Compound Fracture alongside a scenic video shot while on a road trip in California. An acoustic video has been premiered by GQ and BBC Introducing also picked up the track.

Drummer Ross Harris has worked with some major acts before going solo

Grounded

Ross said: "Growing up in West Bromwich was interesting it definitely kept me grounded. The support for arts at that time was great. I owe a lot to Sandwell Youth Music which from age 10 to18 aided my musical development, and kept me busy in a time where I could have been easily distracted.

"I tried to go back there recently and discovered there were no drummers playing in the bands at the moment, which was pretty sad. I really want to get involved and help encourage young musicians to follow the same path I did."

Ross moved to London when he was 19 to study music. He continued: "My first gigs were with a guy called Tricky (from Massive attack) and the boyband Union J. Their profile kind of put me on the map more in the session scene, and working with them eventually led me to work with bigger artists. After that I began working with Ella Henderson for two years, and then Craig David, Duke Dumont and Busted.

"I think the song Compound Fracture came from a bit of built-up angst, and a feeling of disappointment and one day I sat down at the piano and the song just came out. Shooting the video was great fun, I went to California a year after I wrote the song for a few days, and luckily had a road trip to do for a friend's wedding. Another friend who lives in LA was coming with me, and he had a camera, and we just decided to work with the concept I had and try and do it all in this one trip."

To listen to Compound Fracture visit https://soundcloud.com/ross-harrismusic/compound-fracture-1 or Facebook at www.facebook.com/RossHarrisMusic

Helpful Sarah started off the IT crowd for trust

SHE'S the essential part of the IT crowd – but when Sarah Cooke first started working within the NHS it was a lonesome job.

There were just three people in her team back in 1989, with Sarah, aged 51, working as a systems support officer.

Soon afterwards she had the idea of creating an IT helpdesk, which was manned by herself and her colleagues, serving all the computer systems in Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust at the time.

"I pushed the helpdesk idea forward," explained Sarah.

"At the time there wasn't anything like it in place.

"It started off by supporting just a few members of staff and around four or five systems.

"Over time we expanded the helpdesk and it now serves around 7,000 members of staff and supports a few hundred different systems.

Responsible

"I feel very proud when I see how it's developed over the years."

Sarah has also looked after patient administration systems, which means she's responsible for the way that appointments are booked in.

"Her biggest challenge however, is ensuring the Unity project is a success.

She explained: "We are introducing a new electronic patient record system called Unity.

"This will replace others we have in place, so there is just one system that will be more effective.

NHS HEROES

ONCE again we focus some of our time on the quiet heroes of the NHS, from a wide variety of backgrounds doing a wide variety of jobs.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust is one of the Black Country's largest NHS organisations.

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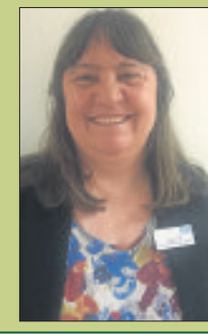
This week we highlight:
SARAH COOKE
Systems support officer



"My job is to make sure the system is built properly."

The Unity project will lead to one integrated solution supporting a range of best practice patient care, improving the legibility of patient records and allowing doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals real time access.

So what drives her at work?

"I believe in the NHS and I believe we can help patients more with the systems we have in place.

"I enjoy coming into work every day, and although I'm not interacting directly with patients, I feel like I can make a real difference to their journey within our Trust."

With so much focus on technology at work, it's no surprise to learn that Sarah switches it all off at home – and chooses to spend time in her shed – doing DIY!

"I have a great collection of power tools," she laughed.

"I use them to make all sorts of things, from planters to plaques. I even enjoy putting up fences.

"It's where I go to escape from it all, and it's certainly different to my day job.

"My husband Andy won't go anywhere near it either. One of my real fears is not being able to do my DIY."

She added: "It's quite an unusual hobby for a woman, but my parents never tried to fit me into a box.

"If I wanted a toy car or train set for Christmas, they bought me one. They never pigeon holed me.

"And because of the way they are, they are definitely my own heroes."

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"With my story I want to inspire people who are in an abyss because of their teeth. I looked for help from the Denture Clinic and it's been a journey full of professionalism, kindness and thanks go to everyone who played their part in restoring my smile and ability to enjoy life again."

Can't stop smiling!

How chef to rich and famous found 'ingredients' for a new life

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ATTRACTIVE, bubbly, confident and with a contagious laugh – there are simply not enough descriptive words to capture in a single sentence the experience of meeting professional chef, Jacky Standish.

Looking younger than her 57 years, Jacky has engaged on an unusual "bucket list", though she's quick to point out: "I'm definitely not dying. Quite the opposite!"

For the dog-lover, who confesses "she doesn't know who to smile at first," the list all about making up for lost time.

It's hard to imagine, this woman who laughs easily and is generous with her smiles, would ever want for anything, but reflecting on recent years she admits "there's plenty of catching up to be done."

Relaxing over a coffee, the former chef and house manager to Hagley Hall's Lord and Lady Cobham, explains that enduring decades of teeth troubles left her battling with some very dark days before receiving implant treatment at North Street Dental and Implant Clinic in Dudley.

"I was deeply ashamed of my teeth. I could cook fabulous meals for the rich and famous who regularly visited the hall. But for my own pleasure with food, it was becoming a nightmare as I found it more and more difficult to eat the meals I prepared.

"My bucket list . . . all the places I want to eat out," she muses, "and I just might cook at home and throw a dinner party . . . that sounds terribly old fashioned, doesn't it," she adds.

"I always used to find meals out with family and friends quite daunting and felt my presence compromised those with whom I was out. Of course, they'd have to find a restaurant with a menu offering something I could chew," Jacky says.

> *"I could be helped, I could be free from pain, I could be transformed, I could have closure..."*
> Jacqueline Standish Nov. 2017

Jacky, suffered with periodontal (gum) disease for decades. "I was informed by my family dentist I would experience dental issues throughout my life.

"At one point I was attending the dentists every three months to try and control the problems, but no matter how I tried, as the years passed I lost more and more teeth," she recalls.

visit www.denture-clinic.co.uk and follow the link to view Jacky's 'reveal' videos

A transformed Jacqueline showing off her beautifully crafted new smile with her pre-treatment look inset

Jacky's confidence plummeted so badly she would walk her dog at 5am to avoid meeting people. "By my mid-50s the erosion on my confidence was as severe as the erosion on my gums," she says,

Now, with four implants retaining an upper overdenture and a partial lower traditional prosthetic, she's thrilled with her new smile. "No-one would ever know they are not my natural teeth. Out with my dog, I can now speak to people and ask 'what sort of dog have you got on your lead?'"

Now look at me!

Jacky, who recently renovated her newly-purchased bungalow, adds: "Everything was finished except a makeover of the front garden. I could have paid to have it done, but decided to invest in my teeth. It was no good having a front garden when you have no front teeth." The surgery was carried out by North Street's implant dentist Owain Rees BDS DGDP (UK) Dip Imp Dent (UCL) GDC 61576.

Summing up her experience Jacky concluded: "I wake up feeling remarkably good, my jaw sore from all the smiling. I came for an initial consultation with Steven [practice principal Steven Burchell Dip CDT RCS Eng GDC 108353] and I could hardly lift my head up.

"Now look at me!"

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Pooch Elsa thaws hearts of people around world

A RESCUE charity has thanked kind-hearted people from around the UK and across the world for helping to save a dog found abandoned and 'on the brink of death'.

A member of the public discovered Elsa, a French Mastiff, at Corngreaves Nature Reserve in Cradley Heath.

The painfully thin dog was eventually taken in by the Animal House Rescue Charity, which is run by volunteers in Sandwell, and given emergency treatment. Now she is firmly on the road to recovery – even enjoying Christmas in a new home with a foster family in Staffordshire.

Charity volunteer Sue Hodges said: "I would just like to say thank you to everyone that has helped.

French Mastiff Elsa, who was found 'on the brink of death'

Elsa now being properly looked after, her weight is up to 26 kg

Letters

"We have been contacted by people from all over the country and across the world, from the likes of China to Australia and America, people have donated money and sent in letters and cards to us and Elsa."

Elsa, who is aged around three or four, was given her nickname because she was found 'frozen'.

She would have died had she not been found that day, said Sue, who at the time appealed for the public to help fund 'substantial' vets bills.

When she was brought into the charity earlier in December, Elsa was terribly malnourished and weighed only 17kg when as a fully grown French Mastiff, she should have been around 45kg.

After being given care and support, Elsa is well on the way to recovery and she now weighs 26kg and is getting better every day. Sue hopes the foster family, who have three other dogs, will take Elsa in permanently once she is fully recovered.

Elsa is being monitored around the clock and as well as being fed to help her back to a healthy weight, sheneeds dressings on her back paws due to sores.

Elsa was also cared for by YourVets in Smethwick, where she was passed onto from Animal House Rescue Charity, which is based in Birmingham.

The charity is run by around 20 volunteers in the Sandwell and Birmingham area.

Contact them on 0121 4223709 or 07989 284683.

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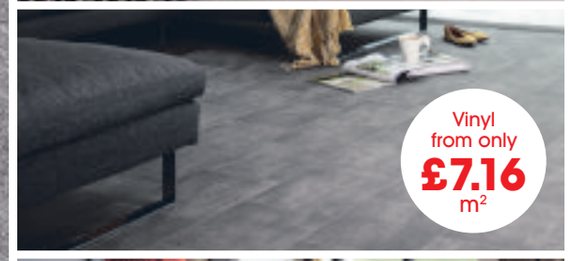

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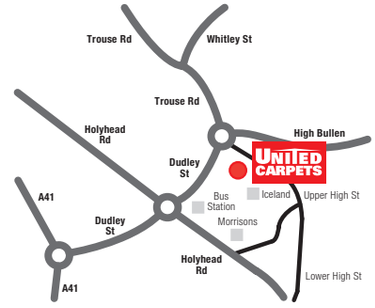

A busy time for officers with 171 New Year arrests

EMERGENCY services were kept busy during the New Year's Eve celebrations with a surge in drink-driving.

West Midlands Police saw the number of arrests increase by around 20 per cent while call-handlers were dealing with up to 60 999 calls every 15 minutes.

By 7am on New Year's Day the force had 171 people in custody compared to an average weekend, which would see between 120 to 140.

The number was exactly the same as January 1, 2017. Oldbury station was one of the busiest in the region with 51 suspects locked up in the cells. Only Perry Barr had more with 57.

A force spokesman stated that not all of the incidents would have been related to the occasion but said it would have contributed significantly to the increase in arrests.

While out on the roads officers were inevitably faced with the increased risk of irresponsible motorists giving in to the temptation to drink-drive.

The Central Motorway Police Group (CMPG), which patrols the West Midlands, Staffordshire and West Mercia areas, declared it was 'annoying' how many people they had to deal with blowing higher than legal limit of 35 micrograms of alcohol for every 100 millilitres of breath.

One driver travelling through Wolverhampton on the M6 between Junction 10a and 10 was stopped for driving on the hard shoulder, with a young child in the car.

To the despair of CMPG officers the motorist blew a 56 on the road-side breath test. Not long after, another suspect was pulled over by patrols in Stafford and recorded a 54. Then between 7am and 8am police came across a man sleeping in a damaged car.

Upon questioning officers found he was disqualified from driving and wanted for three burglaries.

CMPG Tweeted: "Annoying in a way to have to deal with so many drink drivers from the night shift... but at least they're in the cells and off the road."

It's Humphry's year at Woods

A NATIONALLY renowned landscape architect who designed a much-loved Black Country beauty spot more than 200 years ago will be celebrated during a series of events.

Humphry Repton, who is often regarded as a successor to Capability Brown, left his mark on Warley Woods which is enjoyed by thousands of visitors every year.

The park has a Grade II listing due to Repton's design.

Warley Woods Community Trust is looking to mark his contribution during 2018's anniversary year.

Born in Bury St Edmunds in 1752, Repton, the son of a successful tax collector, was expected by his family to become a merchant but his real passions were botany, entomology and gardening.

Commissions

After spending some time in Ireland working as private secretary to William Windham, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, he returned to Essex where he offered his services as an 'improver of the landscape'.

He went on to work on more than 400 commissions during his 30-year career working on many important stately homes.

In around 1794, Mr Repton was contacted by Samuel Galton II who had purchased the Warley Hall estate two years earlier and wanted him to create a setting worthy of his new house to be built.

In his designs, Mr Repton made good use of the lie of the land with its spectacular scenery and panoramic views, which he incorporated into his plan.

Trustees Andrew Bull, Barbara Platts, Viv Cole, Kate Slade and Mick Guy

Still acclaimed, 200 years on, Warley Woods with its green flag status

An image showing Humphry Repton at work

The park seen in all its summer glory

The woods trustees patrol the grounds

He also created contrived views that slowly unfolded for guests, as they toured around the park.

Plans for Warley Woods in 2018 include giving the popular Picnic in the Park event, which will take place in July, an 18th century twist in honour of the landscape designer.

Trust manager Viv Cole said trustees and volunteers were looking forward to the year ahead especially celebrating Mr Repton's work.

"Next year will be an interesting one as while it will continue to be business as usual, golf course, events, encouraging new people to volunteer and join – we have an additional focus.

"It will be the 200th anniversary of the death of Humphry Repton who designed Warley Woods. We are pretty special in being one of the few of his landscapes which are open to the public free of charge and we are one of the very few of his landscapes still largely intact in the West Midlands. We will be putting on special 18th century additions to the Picnic in the Park and we will be hosting a formal lecture about Repton and Warley Woods from a prestigious academic.

"We have also been chosen by the Gardens Trust as the location for a pilot project involving volunteers researching garden history."

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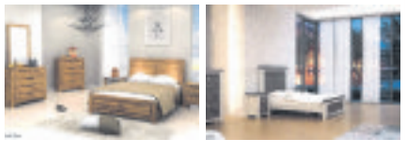

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New Year Lifestyle

A special Chronicle feature to welcome in 2018

Discover the Andes with Sol super oils

For those looking to add an extra element of health to their diet, look no further as Andean Sol, the premium superfood brand, has launched an innovative range of Chia Oils this month.

By working closely with farmers in the Andean region of South America, Andean Sol brings the essence of the mountains to the UK with the creation of its Olive and Chia Oil and Extra Virgin Chia Oil.

A world first, the Olive and Chia Oil is cold pressed to maximise flavour, adding life to any dish, whether it's drizzled, dipped or doused over food.

Available in 250ml bottles with a RRP of £8.99, the nutritious oil brings together the best of both worlds, the sublime taste of the highest quality olive oil blended with the impressive plant based Omega-3 power of cold pressed chia oil.

The result is a rich peppery oil that will add depth to any dish.

Alongside this ground-breaking new condiment, Andean Sol has also launched a pure Extra Virgin Chia Oil.

Made from the finest chia seeds grown in the warm and sunny foothills of the Andes Mountains, the Extra Virgin Chia Oil is deliciously light and contains approximately 64 per cent of plant powered Omega-3 fatty acids. With a light nutty flavour it is the ideal nutritious salad dressing.

Available in 100ml bottles with a RRP of £9.99, you can experience the true taste of the Andes with every drop. Ever wondered where your food really comes from?

Well now you can know, by entering in the unique code found on the back of Andean Sol packs onto their website, you can learn about the process, people and farm who worked hard to create the new oil range.

The Andean Sol range is available now on Ocado.

Enjoy beautiful outdoors while getting healthier

It's a brand new year, and for many of us now is the time to get fitter and healthier – and being active needn't cost you money.

Enjoying the great outdoors is part of what makes living in Shropshire and Mid Wales so wonderful.

We are blessed with some of the most beautiful countryside in the UK, and as we come into a new year, there has never been a better time to enjoy it with your family.

For a lovely family walk while the weather is still crisp, wrap up warm and take in the landscape of Attingham Park. With walking routes from one to three miles throughout the park, you'll find somewhere new to explore every time you visit. Visitors can enjoy beautiful vistas across the Shropshire Hills, and gorgeous photo opportunities in abundance.

Guests of the park during January and February can also take the opportunity to get closer to its herd of fallow deer and watch them be fed by the wardens.

Attingham Park boasts around 200 fallow deer, and during the colder months they need supplement feed to keep them strong and healthy. It is a long tradition at Attingham to feed the deer; the eighth Lord Berwick loved his fallow deer herd so much he would often feed them himself. Visitors to the park can pick up a map of walks from its reception, and also download these from the website at www.nationaltrust.org.uk

The cold can be harsh on the Long Mynd, though a family walk there in the early months of the year can be a wonderful opportunity to see a lot of wildlife. Part of the Long Mynd, High Park is better for birds in winter than any other time of year, due to the chance of seeing a large flock of Golden Plover. The size of the flock varies from year to year, but has reached 350. The birds feed on the short wet vegetation anywhere around the area where the road up from High Park crosses onto National Trust land.

Ponies

Raven and Buzzard may be seen here at this time of year as well, and whatever the time of year there is always a good chance of spotting the ponies.

If snow lies on the ground or after rain when the paths are muddy, check for footprints and other tracks and signs of mammals and birds. Lots of fun can be had working out what activity has taken place in the early hours, with foxes and badgers using many of the footpaths more than human visitors have!

Walking can be both invigorating and relaxing, though if you are looking to enjoy the outdoors with a bit more of a twist, you may want to try your hand at Geocaching.

This high-tech take on a treasure hunt involves participants using a GPS receiver to find caches that other people have hidden. This global phenomenon began in the USA in 2000 when the first cache was hidden. Today there are close to three million hidden all over the world. A cache itself typically consists of a box containing a log book and and number of low value 'treasures'. Participants visit the Geocashing website to acquire the rough location of caches in their area and clues to help them find them.

The idea is that when you find a cache, you sign the log book, take a treasure for your reward and replace this with something for the next lucky finder. There are a number of caches hidden across our region and searching for them can be a really fun and different way of enjoying the Shropshire countryside. For information and to get started, visit. www.geocaching.co.uk

For many of us, taking in the country air goes hand-in-hand with spending time with our canine companions.

For any dog lovers looking to enjoy the great outdoors and get fit at the same, Canicross may be just the new hobby you were looking for. Canicross is essentially the sport of running off-road with a dog. Human participants wear a waistbelt which attaches via a two-metre bungee line to a padded dog harness. It can be a fantastic way to keep you and your dog in good shape, whilst enjoying the countryside together.

This can be a great activity to either enjoy with just you and your dog or in one of the many organised clubs that are passionate about the sport. Check online for events and groups that can help you and your faithful pal enjoy 2018 in a whole new and healthy way.

HEALTH: Bring your mind and diet together

Reformed yo-yo dieter Lisa Beasley is on a mission: To get us to ditch diets for good, and focus on pursuing a healthy relationship with food and eating – and, in effect, ourselves – instead.

As somebody who 'spent years feeling uncomfortable' in her own body, Lisa is all too familiar with the cycle of not only fluctuating weight that comes from swinging between dieting and overeating – but the guilt, fragile self-esteem and shame entangled with it too.

Since transforming her own relationship with food, she's founded My Body Positive and runs workshops and eight-week courses (Lisa's a licensed facilitator of Dr Michelle May's award-winning 'Am I Hungry?' programme), to help others do the same.

Weight-loss is not the focus, but she acknowledges that often, people who struggle with their relationship with food might want to lose weight.

She firmly believes, though, that being trapped in negative mindsets – like thinking you're only 'worthy' and can only fully enjoy life if you're slim; messages we're bombarded with – is usually one of the things driving us to overeat.

She's all about unlocking these cycles and helping people feel better about themselves, even if they don't reach that 'goal' weight.

Want to know Lisa's secret? It all comes down to mindful eating, which, hopefully, will help you feel happy in your skin – no matter the number on your jeans label.

Moment

Here, Lisa shares some mindful eating practices that could transform the way you eat:

● Whenever you reach for food, just take a moment to check in with what you're actually feeling "Do you have a physical feeling of hunger in your stomach?

"Because if you don't, it could be that you are eating for other reasons. That's OK by the way – lots of us do that – just becoming aware of this is a necessary first step."

Paying attention to what you are eating makes food so much more satisfying. "We've all sat in front of the TV before and got through a whole packet of chocolate without hardly noticing.

"Bringing yourself into the moment to pay attention to the flavours, texture and even temperature of your food will help you to feel satisfied much sooner."

● Listen to your body

"Learning to listen to yourself more carefully and work out what food you are really hungry for can completely change what you eat. It may sound radical, but you can actually eat what you truly want and need. And it won't just be cake, I promise!"

● Let go of diet thinking

"This is really important. If you spend your time restricting what you eat, or not allowing yourself to have what you want, there will come a time when you rebound and go back to what you were doing before."

Eat with the intention of feeling better than when you started. "This is about feeling good, not being good!"

For more information visit mybodypositive.co.uk

Lisa Beasley spent years 'feeling uncomfortable in her own body'

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2018

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The Ticket

SCOTT'S MORE THAN A PASSING STRANGER

INSIDE

THEATRE + MUSIC + TV GUIDE + PUZZLES

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

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Benjamins opened in Birmingham Street, Halesowen in December 1997, the building was originally The Primitive Methodist Chapel and supporting buildings erected in 1868 according to the stone over the main entrance, a foundation stone was laid in August 1889 by the then Mayor of Dudley Benjamin Hingley Esq. MP and although not named after Benjamin Hingley the stone was certainly the inspiration for the name of the Banqueting Suite.

The stone now takes pride of place over the fire place in the Cornbow Room.

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The Aldridge and Beaumont Suites are adjacent on the first floor and are usually used as one room for larger parties, ideal for formal weddings due to its open plan layout.

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For civil ceremonies where the guest numbers exceed 100 both rooms can be open and used for the service and can accommodate up to 200 guests for the service.

Civil ceremonies for up to 100 guests can also take place in the Cornbow Room.

Civil Ceremonies of less than 100 usually conducted in the Beaumont Suite or Cornbow Rooms.

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The simple life for Scott's new sound

Wolverhampton's Ivor Novello Award-winning singer Scott Matthews is planning a busy 2018 with the release of his new album, The Great Untold.

The singer/songwriter plans to release the record in April with a tour following in May. It will include a date at Birmingham's St Paul's Church on May 20.

The record is Scott's simplest to date. For the first time in his five-album career, there's no band, no lavish production – just Scott. It is a man, a guitar and a song. It sounds simple, doesn't it? And it is.

Scott's new record, The Great Untold, is a career-defining masterpiece. The sixth studio album by the Ivor Novello Award-winning singer-songwriter is the one that many have craved: it is a masterclass in honesty, instinct and reflection.

A largely acoustic recording, Scott's sublime new record features sparse production. Recorded at home and in acoustically-resonant rural churches, instrumentation has been jettisoned. His 10-song cycle is the sound of a man comfortable in his own skin, putting his neck on the line with a collection of otherworldly songs.

"I'm still working on it but it's coming together and the songs are there. The record will be out in spring. I've always wanted to record a sparse, stripped back record and finally the time felt right to do that."

The ghosts of Paul Simon, Tim Buckley, Nick Drake and John Martyn loom large on a collection that ranks alongside work by some of the world's great singer-songwriters. On his sixth record, Scott has created songs that are breathtaking in their beauty and audacious in their simplicity.

The absence of drums, bass, cello and flute on The Great Untold, however, should not infer that it lacks depth. Far from it. The richness in Scott's new work comes from subtle playing and mellifluous melodies. He has improved again. He has become a master of his craft; a man who can play like Bert Jansch, sing like an angel and write songs that Joni Mitchell might admire.

Scott has been fine-tuning his sixth studio album

REFINED

In many ways, The Great Untold is the start of a new era for Scott. Since his debut album, Passing Stranger, in 2006, the Wolverhampton-born star of bluesy acoustica has refined his craft. Writing deft and sensitive songs during a trajectory that begin with the ethereal Elusive, The Great Untold marks a new beginning.

The first great arc of his career was completed with his Home duology; a stunning pair of records that reflected on his journey thus far. The Great Untold is the sound of a man moving on. Scott is recently married, soon-to-experience fatherhood and has new hopes and fears, new stories to tell. "After Home Part 2 was finished, I was looking to move forward by marrying harmony with my experiences since the last record. The plan to write an acoustic record has always been there. I take a while over the songs. But in recent years, I've been keen to release more records. So I'm setting myself deadlines and working more quickly. Robert Plant once told me I ought to do more – and I took his advice."

Scott has tested himself as a songwriter. The absence of a band means he is vulnerable and exposed. But, in many ways, it was ever thus. He started as a soloist and is ready to fly alone. It opens new possibilities, a different type of challenge. "It takes me out of my comfort zone and has made me test myself. I've pared it down to guitar and vocals. At the beginning, there was nobody else. It's time to surprise myself. It's time to go back to my own world. I've gone full circle.

"This is how it all began. I would write at home, in Wolverhampton, and I'm doing that again now."

Lyrically, The Great Untold is a work with poetic intent. "It's a collection of songs that lots of people will relate to. It's a real mood-shift of a record. The songs always start from a personal angle, but listeners will hear them in different ways. When I'm writing, I'm almost hearing voices from The Masters and thinking: 'Would they approve?'" The point is to make a connection.

"I want to move somebody with the power of moods and music. It's very powerful stuff."

It is in the right hands. And that's an apposite description for The Great Untold. It is a record written by a man at the peak of his powers, by a musician able to channel great beauty in songs that reveal the most human of truths.

> *It's a collection of songs that lots of people will relate to*

Scott remains proud of his Black Country heritage and The Great Untold is a record rooted in the region. He has a home studio in his back garden – he calls it the Shedio – and that's where he disappears with his thoughts.

"Things have changed a lot. Back in the day there was the big record label, the management deal and all sorts of people around us. These days it's just my wife and I: we make the decisions, I write the songs, we take it on the road. I kind of like doing things that way. It gives us more artistic control. It's been a steep learning curve but there's a lot to be said for keeping things simple."

Keeping things simple is precisely what The Great Untold does. And with his demos for the record now complete, it's shaping up to be the greatest record of his career.

ANDY RICHARDSON

● Scott Matthews is running a Pledge campaign for people who want to pre-order copies of the record and further details are available at www.scottmatthews.uk

● For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.

Shrek The Musical

Ogre-awed – Alexandra has dazzling new season

A HOST of exciting productions are set to grace the stage of the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham after the venue revealed its dazzling new season.

Shrek The Musical, Strangers On A Train and the astounding Cirque Berserk are just some of the hit shows lined up at the Station Street theatre. Plus, the UK premiere of Sting's Geordie musical The Last Ship and war drama Sebastian Faulks' Birdsong.

It all kicks off next week with The Sound of Music. The Voice finalist Lucy O'Byrne returns in the role of Maria, opposite EastEnders star Neil McDermott as Captain Von Trapp. The Rodgers and Hammerstein show has an unforgettable score featuring Edelweiss, My Favorite Things, Do-Re-Mi, Climb Ev'ry Mountain, and, of course, the title song. Bill Kenwright's production is staged from January 16 to 20.

Strangers on a Train, January 29 to February 3, is a thriller about a murder swap, made into a classic movie by Alfred Hitchcock. It features Christopher Harper (from Coronation Street) John Middleton (Emmerdale) and Hannah Tointon (Mr Selfridge).

Based on the story and characters from the Oscar-winning Dreamworks animation, Shrek The Musical bursts onto the stage from February 14 to 25.

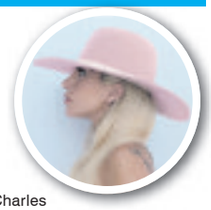
Cirque Berserk features the world's most hair-raising circus act – the motorcycle Globe Of Death. At the theatre from March 14 to 18.

Andrew 'Freddie' Flintoff makes his stage debut in Kay Mellor's Fat Friends, alongside Jodie Prenger, Sam Bailey and Kevin Kennedy from April 3 to 7.

The UK premiere of Sting's personal, political and passionate musical The Last Ship is an epic tale of community and defiance starring Jimmy Nail from April 16 to 21.

Legally Blonde The Musical features Eastenders star Rita Simons and Eurovision hopeful Lucie Jones from May 21 to 26. Shows in June will include Summer Holiday The Musical, based on the Cliff Richard film, and Birdsong to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

Busy start to the new year of gigs



Now the festivities are over, the streamers and empties have been cleaned away at the region's venues and it's time to look forward to some of the best gigs coming up early in 2018.

The mega venues boast the biggest names with Paramore at the Genting Arena on January 14 and Lady Gaga (pictured) with her rescheduled tour calling in at the NEC venue on February 1, the day after her Arena Birmingham gig.

Then the Genting has Kendrick Lamar on February 9, The Script (15th), Imagine Dragons (24th), Morrissey (27th) and pride of Wales the Stereophonics on March 1.

Highlights at Birmingham O2 Academy includes festival favourites The Hunna on Thursday (January 11). Hollywood rockers Black Veil Brides co-headline with York's Asking Alexandria on January 23, punk veterans The Damned visit on February 1, then 80s faves Erasure play on February 11. Later next month gigs to watch out for at the Academy include Texan punks Bowling For Soup (13th), Slam Dunk and Download regulars Don Broco (15th) and Scottish indie rock legends Franz Ferdinand back with a new album (20th).

Across the city in Digbeth, things start to get interesting at the O2 Institute on February 1 with tipped-for-the-top Reading rockers The Amazons. American punk veterans The Dead Boys mark 40 years since their debut on February 2 and highly rated young American rockers Highly Suspect play on the same night in the venue's larger room. Expect some Sheffield steel on February 6 when up-and-coming metal monsters When She Sleeps roar into action.

Grammy nominated LA R&B singer-songwriter Jhené Aiko is at the Institute on February 8 and California rockers Alien Ant Farm are in action on February 12.

The voice of Mike & The Mechanics and Ace, Paul Carrack, has two concerts at Symphony Hall Birmingham on February 3 and 18.

Aussie star singer Natalie Imbruglia is at Birmingham Town Hall on February 5 and country pop legends The Mavericks will dance the night away at Symphony Hall on February 8.

Highlights at the Hare and Hounds in Kings Heath include ex-Special Roddy Radiaion with his Skabilly Rebels on January 13 and the following night it's garage rockers The Surfing Magazines (featuring ex-members of The Wave Pictures and Slow Club).

Craig Charles opens his trunk of funk, DJing at the Hare'n on the 19th. Reggae star General Levy visits on January 27 then there are two nights of psychedelic rock with noisy LA outfit Wand (29th) and San Francisco's Moon Duo (30th).

Things will get pretty cosmic too at the Robin 2 in Bilston on Sunday when the latest version of Space Ritual, featuring founder members of Hawkwind Nik Turner and Terry Ollis, beam down for a space rock celebration.

Also coming up at Mount Pleasant venue is the 30th annivesary performance of rock opera Operation Mindcrime by Geoff Tate on January 17 and British blues rocker Aysley Lister Band on the 18th.

Jump n jive with King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys on January 25, and good time rock n rollers The Quireboys deliver an acoustic set at the Robin on January 28.

Final few recommendations: Watch out for Mobo-winning singer Zara McFarlane at the Hare and Hounds on February 7; the return of Everything Everything after their A Fever Dream album with a gig at the O2 Academy on March 3; and a rare UK outing for American roots outfit Pokey Lafarge at the O2 Institute on March 7.

COMMERCIAL FEATURE

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Manager Mandy always ensure a warm welcome to customers old and new at the Waggon & Horses in Oldbury.

Waggon & Horses also showcase all the major sporting events from Football to Boxing all featured on Sky Sports, BT Sports and Box Nation. For those who like 'doing' rather than 'watching' there is the availability of the Pool Table. The pub itself boasts a wide range of ciders, lagers, wines and spirits including 'Real Ales' which they rotate weekly. Regulars very often enjoy ales such as Bathams, AJ Ales, Oakham, JHB, Stairway To Heaven and MA Pardoes Entire, Plus many more!.

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SATURDAY'S TV JANUARY 6

CHOICE

Jim Sturgess

Hard Sun
(BBC1, 9.35pm)
A drama series about detectives who stumble across a government conspiracy while investigating a death may not sound particularly original – but the secret that cops Charlie Hicks (Jim Sturgess) and Elaine Renko (Agyness Deyn) uncover in Hard Sun involves the end of the world. The mismatched officers are dealing with a murder in the inner-city when they find proof that the Earth faces certain destruction in just five years due to a mysterious cosmic event, a fact the powers-that-be would very much like to keep under wraps. The duo must use every bit of their ingenuity to protect themselves as they are pursued by Secret Service operatives who are willing to silence them for good.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Mary Berry Everyday. (R) **12.00** BBC News; Weather. **12.15** Football Focus. **12.45** MOTD Live: FA Cup. Fleetwood Town v Leicester City (Kick-off 12.45pm). **3.00** Money for Nothing. (R) **4.00** Final Score. **5.10** Celebrity Mastermind. **5.40** BBC News. **5.50** Regional Programme.

6.00 And They're Off for Sport Relief. New series. Ore Oduba hosts a sporting challenge in which celebrities compete in a series of bizarre races, while members of the public try to predict which star will win.

6.40 Pointless Celebrities. Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present a 1980s edition of the celebrity quiz, featuring four teams of famous faces from the decade seeking unlikely answers.

7.25 Wedding Day Winners. New series. Lorraine Kelly and Rob Beckett host a game show in which two couples, aided by friends and family, compete through a series of challenges for the chance to win a televised wedding and a dream honeymoon.

8.30 Casualty. The truth about Connie's illness is out, following her dramatic collapse while at work. As she recovers, she is devastated to hear that her colleagues are aware of her terminal diagnosis. Worse still is the news that her tumour has grown, and complications now mean that her consultant refuses to operate. Discharging herself, Connie persuades Ethan to drive her to London for a second opinion, but when she loses consciousness en route and is rushed into emergency surgery, her put-upon protege faces an agonising wait for news. Meanwhile, back at the ED, Dylan struggles to hold the fort, in the absence of more experienced hands.

9.20 BBC News; Weather.

9.35 Hard Sun. New series. Sci-fi crime drama starring Jim Sturgess and Agyness Deyn as two detectives who must find a way to keep the peace after discovering that the world is about to end.

10.30 MOTD: FA Cup Highlights: National Lottery Update.

12.05 The NFL Show. **12.35 Film:** The Resident. (2011) **2.00** Weather for the Week Ahead. **2.05** BBC News.

BBC2

6.10 The Wonder of Animals. (R) **6.40** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. **7.10** The Pets Factor. **7.30** Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch. **7.45** Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch. **8.00** The Dengineers. **8.30** Deadly Top 10. (R) **9.00** World's Sneakiest Animals. (R) **10.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **11.00** Pets – Wild at Heart. (R) **12.00** The Hairy Bikers' Mediterranean Adventure. (R) **1.00** Back to the Land with Kate Humble. (R) **2.00** Rome Unpacked. (R) **3.00 Film:** The Letter. (1940) **4.30** Jaguars Born Free: Natural World Special. (R) **5.15** Trust Me, I'm a Doctor. (R) **5.45** Tom Kerridge's Lose Weight For Good. (R)

6.15 Hugh's Wild West. New series. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall goes in search of wildlife with the most dedicated nature lovers in the West Country, beginning in the Wye Valley and the Forest of Dean.

7.15 A House Through Time. Documentary charting 180 years of British history as lived through by the successive inhabitants of a terraced house in Liverpool, from the 1840s to the present day. (R)

8.15 Dad's Army. Capt Mainwaring and the platoon offer to help Pte Godfrey's widowed friend gather in the harvest on her farm – but their well-meaning efforts end in predictable chaos. (R)

8.45 Grand Tours of Scotland's Lochs. Paul Murton travels from Loch Gairloch to Loch Maree, meeting the king and queen of Islonia, matching a medieval feat of archery and diving to a wartime wreck in Loch Ewe.

9.15 Feud: Bette and Joan. The convivial atmosphere that Bette is creating with her co-stars frustrates Joan, as she tries to sleep following the beginning of filming in Louisiana.

10.00 Feud: Bette and Joan. Both actresses reflect on what might have been and Joan gets a call from her agent, who advises her against appearing in low-budget feature The Missing Link. Last in the series.

11.00 Live at the Apollo Christmas Special. Festive fun, hosted by Katherine Ryan, with Marlon Davis, Joel Dommett and John Robins.

11.45 QI XL. With Josh Widdicombe.

12.30 Later – with Jools Holland 25th Birthday Show. (R) **2.30** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Fangbone. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Saturday Morning with James Martin. **11.30** The Hungry Sailors. (R) **12.30** ITV News; Weather. **12.40** Endeavour. (R) **2.40** The Greatest TV Moments of All Time. (R) **4.35** Regional Programme ; Weather.**4.45** ITV News; Weather. **4.55** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R)

6.00 Catchphrase. Stephen Mulhern hosts a celebrity special of the game show, with Ellie Simmonds, Fay Ripley and Jimmy Carr guessing the familiar phrases hidden in animated clues.

7.00 Take Me Out. New series. A hairdresser, a rugby player, a children's entertainer and a student try to impress 30 single women and win a date. Paddy McGuinness presents.

8.00 The Voice UK. New series. Emma Willis hosts the seventh series of the singing contest, which this year sees Olly Murs joining returning coaches Will.i.am, Tom Jones and Jennifer Hudson on the famous spinning chairs. The search for a star kicks off, as usual, with the first in a series of rounds of blind auditions, as the panel listen to each contestant with their backs turned, ensuring that they judge the performance on the strength of vocal ability alone. Those who succeed here will progress to the Battle and Knockout phases.

9.35 ITV News; Weather.

9.50 Film: Spectre. (2015) James Bond goes rogue after receiving a cryptic message that sets him on the trail of a secretive criminal network. While his colleagues face a new threat closer to home, Bond embarks on a globetrotting journey in search of the elusive mastermind behind the syndicate – whom he discovers may have links to his own past. Spy thriller, starring Daniel Craig.

12.30 Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

7.25 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.50** Frasier. (R) **8.20** Frasier. (R) **8.55** Frasier. (R) **9.25** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **9.50** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.20** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.50** The Simpsons. (R) **11.15** The Simpsons. (R) **11.45** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses. (R) **12.45** Darts: BDO Lakeside World Professional Championships. Live coverage of the afternoon session on the opening day of the tournament. **5.30** A Place in the Sun: Summer Sun. (R)

6.30 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Spying on the Royals. Part one of a two-part documentary examining an espionage operation conducted to gather information on Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson. Shown to mark the 80th anniversary of the king's abdication, the programmes examines recently declassified documents revealing the extent of the surveillance and who ordered it, as well as featuring dramatic reconstructions and eyewitness accounts. (R)

8.00 Princess Diana's "Wicked" Stepmother. An examination of the turbulent relationship between Diana, Princess of Wales and her formidable stepmother Raine Spencer, who rose from humble origins with the help of her larger-than-life mother, the novelist Barbara Cartland, to become a countess and a member of the royal family. Raine was a divisive figure, who was doted on by her husband Johnnie Spencer but loathed by Diana and her siblings. Yet as the princess's marriage collapsed, she reached out to her stepmother for support, marking a change in the women's relationship. (R)

9.00 Film: The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 2. (2015) Premiere. The civilisation of Panem is consumed by a bloody civil war. Reluctant rebel leader Katniss Everdeen leads a band of her allies on a mission to end the conflict at one stroke by assassinating the despotic President Snow – but faces many dangers as she closes in on her target. Conclusion of the sci-fi adventure series based on Suzanne Collins' novels, starring Jennifer Lawrence.

11.40 Film: The Transporter. (2002)

1.25 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **2.15** Hollyoaks. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **9.35** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.10** Dogs Make You Laugh Out Loud 2. (R) **10.40** Cruising with Jane McDonald Christmas Special. (R) **11.40 Film:** West Side Story. (1961) **2.30 Film:** The Hundred-Foot Journey. (2014) Comedy drama, starring Helen Mirren. **3.30** 5 News Update. **3.35 Film:** The Hundred-Foot Journey. (2014) Concluded. **4.55** 5 News Weekend. **5.00** Playful Pups Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R)

6.00 The Wonderful World of Puppies. New series. Documentary charting the first few months of a dog's life, following different breeds as they take the first steps on their own unique developmental journey. Dalmatians Daphne and Digby start to develop the spots that will mark them out for life, and take their first stumbling steps in the great outdoors. Ruby the toy poodle's huge personality belies her diminutive frame, while abandoned Jack Russell pup Boomer's shattered confidence will need to be rebuilt by the love of a foster home.

7.00 Greatest Celebrity Wind-Ups Ever! Joe Pasquale narrates a special documentary celebrating some of the greatest pranks celebrities have managed to play on each other. (R)

8.00 Blind Date. Paul O'Grady hosts a revival of the dating show in which a drama teacher from Surrey and a digger driver from Hull must choose between three unseen suitors.

9.00 Celebrity Big Brother. Friday's highlights from the house, including another chance to see what surprise Big Brother sprung on the women last night.

10.00 Worst Celebrity Pop Songs Ever. A countdown of the 40 most memorable records by celebrities, featuring performances by Mr T, Katie Price, Vinnie Jones, Sam Fox and an assortment of soap stars. (R)

11.45 Lip Sync Battle UK: Rufus Hound v Jorgie Porter. Melanie Brown and Professor Green present the musical game show as comedian Rufus Hound and actress Jorgie Porter go head to head lip-synching to a hit song. (R)

12.15 SuperCasino. **3.10** Secrets of the National Trust with Alan Titchmarsh. (R) **4.00** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **4.45** House Doctor. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Shipwrecks: Britain's Sunken History **8.00** Alaska – Earth's Frozen Kingdom **9.00** Spiral **11.05** The Vietnam War **12.00** Bee Gees at the BBC and Beyond **1.00** Disco at the BBC **2.00** Alaska – Earth's Frozen Kingdom **3.00** Shipwrecks: Britain's Sunken History **4.00** Close

ITV2
12.00 The Big Soap Quiz: Coronation Street v Emmerdale **1.00** Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway Presents – Who Shot Simon Cowell? **1.30** You've Been Framed! Gold **3.05 Film:** Legally Blonde (2001) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10 Film:** Legally Blonde (2001) **4.55 Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **5.55** FYI Daily **6.00 Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **6.40 Film:** The Mummy (1999) **7.40** FYI Daily **7.45 Film:** The Mummy (1999) **9.00 Film:** The Hangover (2009) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05 Film:** The Hangover (2009) **11.10** Family Guy **12.10** American Dad! **1.05 Film:** Paranoia (2013) **2.05** FYI Daily **2.10 Film:** Paranoia (2013) **3.00** Teleshopping

ITV3
11.05 Foyle's War **1.10 Film:** Columbo: Suitable for Framing (1971) **2.55** Midsomer Murders **11.00** The Suspicions of Mr Whicher: The Murder in Angel Lane **1.00** On the Buses **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4
1.30 ITV Racing: Live from Sandown & Wincanton. Ed Chamberlin presents live coverage of today's race meetings. **4.05 Film:** Khartoum (1966) **5.10** FYI Daily **5.15 Film:** Khartoum (1966) **6.45 Film:** Dr No (1962) **7.50** FYI Daily **7.55 Film:** Dr No (1962) **9.00 Film:** The Enforcer (1976) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05 Film:** The Enforcer (1976) **11.05 Film:** Platoon (1986) **12.10** FYI Daily **12.15 Film:** Platoon (1986) **1.25** Car Crash Global: Caught on Camera **2.25** Tommy Cooper **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen

E4
12.30 Don't Tell the Bride **1.35** The Goldbergs **4.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00 Film:** Red (2010) **11.10** Gogglebox **1.20** Rude Tube: Love Bytes **2.20** Gogglebox **3.15** First Dates **4.10** How I Met Your Mother **4.55** Rude(ish) Tube

Film4
11.00 Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days (2012) **1.00** The Indian in the Cupboard (1995) **2.50** Rio (2011) **4.40** Tooth Fairy (2010) **6.45** GI Joe: Retaliation (2013) **9.00** Now You See Me (2013) **11.15** Insidious: Chapter 3 (2015) **1.10** Mr Nice (2010) **3.35** Close

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SUNDAY'S TV JANUARY 7

CHOICE

Holly Willoughby (left)

Dancing on Ice (ITV, 6pm)

Some shows just run and run, never pausing for breath and seemingly always at the top of the ratings tree. Others burn brightly, fade away and need a wee rest before coming back better than ever. ITV is hoping that Dancing on Ice falls into the latter category. It ran for nine series between 2006 and 2014, then took a break. Now it's back, as are presenters Holly Willoughby and Phillip Schofield and judge Jason Gardiner; Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean return too, but as judges rather than mentors, while Ashley Banjo will also offer his opinions. But it's the participants we're most interested in, and they're a mixed bunch.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** MOTD: FA Cup Highlights. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.00** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Wallace & Gromit: A Grand Day Out. (R) **1.40** MOTD Live: FA Cup. Shrewsbury Town v West Ham United (Kick-off 2.00pm). **4.00** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.30** Songs of Praise. **5.05** Antiques Roadshow. (R)

6.05 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 Countryfile. The team explores the Ribble Valley. Matt Baker visits the Gisburn Forest, Anita Rani meets refugees who are discovering farming in the snow, and Adam Henson learns about stallions that have a vital role to play in preserving rare breeds of horses. Plus, Tom Heap reports on a controversy surrounding new rules on gun licensing. Including weather for the week ahead.

7.30 Still Open All Hours. Granville has a new idea for growing the business and branches out into offering fitness classes, while Mr Newbold undergoes an image overhaul to repel Mrs Featherstone.

8.00 Attenborough and the Sea Dragon. The naturalist joins a team of scientists examining the 200 million-year-old fossilised remains of an icthyosaur, a vast sea creature which was discovered on Dorset's Jurassic Coast. As the skeleton is reassembled, advanced imaging technology and computer animation is used to create a simulation of the sea creature as it would have appeared when it was still alive – the most detailed reconstruction of its kind ever attempted. Meanwhile, forensic investigators painstakingly examine the bones to solve the mystery of how the icthyosaur died.

9.00 McMafia. Alex receives an offer from someone claiming to be an old friend, and Semiyon seeks backing for his business venture – while Lyudmilla uncovers his investors' secrets.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 MOTD: FA Cup Highlights.

11.30 The Women's Football Show.

12.05 Weather for the Week Ahead.

12.10 BBC News.

BBC2

6.20 Coast. (R) **7.20** The Instant Gardener. (R) **8.05** Gardeners' World. (R) **8.35** Greatest Gardens. (R) **9.05** Countryfile. (R) **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.30** Raymond Blanc: How to Cook Well. (R) **12.00** Food & Drink. (R) **12.30** The A to Z of TV Cooking. (R) **12.40** Meet the Moose Family: Natural World. (R) **1.40** Money for Nothing. (R) **2.10** Talking Pictures: Maggie Smith. (R) **2.50 Film:** Ladies in Lavender. (2004) Period drama, starring Judi Dench and Maggie Smith. **4.30** Flog It! (R) **5.15** Ski Sunday.

6.00 The Real T. Rex with Chris Packham. Chris Packham embarks on a global journey to discover the truth about the Tyrannosaurus rex, which has endured centuries of scientific inaccuracy and Hollywood misrepresentation. The naturalist uses new studies into dinosaur skin, teeth and muscles, as well as groundbreaking insights into its behaviour to create the most accurate CGI representation of the dinosaur ever produced. To help, Chris speaks to experts in birds, biomechanics and alligators, and has access to one of the most complete Tyrannosaurus rex skeletons in existence. (R)

7.00 Robot Wars Special 2017: The World Series. The second of two specials pitting champions from past series against rivals from other countries, featuring contenders from Russia, the USA, Canada and the Netherlands.

8.00 Dragons' Den. A serial entrepreneur pitches his online greeting card business, and a Surrey-based inventor hopes his word game could become a family Christmas favourite. (R)

9.00 Michael Palin: A Life on Screen. The actor and writer looks back on his career. Featuring classic clips from the archives and contributions from collaborators John Cleese, David Jason and Armando Iannucci.

10.00 Film: And Now for Something Completely Different. (1971) Compilation of sketches from the first two series of Monty Python's Flying Circus. Starring John Cleese, Michael Palin, Terry Jones, Graham Chapman, Eric Idle and Terry Gilliam.

11.25 Film: Strictly Ballroom. (1992)

1.00 Sign Zone: Countryfile. (R) **1.55** Holby City. (R) **2.55** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Ben 10. **8.10** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Spy School. **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** River Monsters. (R) **9.55** The Voice UK. (R) **11.30** Tipping Point. (R) **12.30** ITV News; Weather. **12.40** A Right Royal Quiz. (R) **1.40** The Big Soap Quiz: Coronation Street v Emmerdale. (R) **2.45** Catchphrase. (R) **3.45** Regional Programme ; Weather.**4.00** ITV News; Weather. **4.10 Film:** Happy Feet Two. (2011) Animated musical comedy sequel, with the voice of Elijah Wood.

6.00 Dancing on Ice. New series. Celebrities and professional partners figure skaters pair up as after a four-year break, Holly Willoughby and Phillip Schofield reunite as hosts of the popular dance contest. Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean are also back, though as judges rather than mentors, alongside Jason Gardiner and Ashley Banjo. This year's contestants are Donna Air, Cheryl Baker, Alex Beresford, Candice Brown, Kem Cetinay, Antony Cotton, Max Evans, Lemar, Jake Quickenden, Perri Shakes-Drayton, Brooke Vincent and Stephanie Waring.

8.00 Vera. New series. The detective investigates when charred human remains are found in an abattoir furnace, and attempts to deduce who they belong to and how they came to be here. Brenda Blethyn returns for an eighth series of mysteries based on Ann Cleeves' novels.

10.00 ITV News; Weather.

10.10 Film: Captain Phillips. (2013) The captain of a cargo ship travelling around the coast of Somalia is taken hostage when pirates raid the vessel. Fact-based thriller, starring Tom Hanks and Barkhad Abdi.

12.35 Great Art. (R) **1.30** Jackpot247. Interactive gaming. **3.00** Sunday Night at the Palladium. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen. Text-based information service. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.15 The King of Queens. (R) **6.40** The King of Queens. (R) **7.05** The King of Queens. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Darts: BDO Lakeside World Professional Championships. Live coverage of the afternoon session on the second day of the tournament. **5.30** The Great Festive Bake Off. (R)

6.45 Channel 4 News.

7.00 The World's Wildest Weather. Footage shot by members of the public of unusual and dangerous weather from around the world, including Alpine avalanches and cyclones in the South Pacific. The programme features first-hand accounts of the events featured and scientific analysis of the footage and how the strange weather conditions came about.

8.00 The Biggest Little Railway in the World. New series. Dick Strawbridge leads a team of enthusiasts attempting to build the longest model railway in history, stretching 71 miles across Scotland from Fort William on the west coast to Inverness on the east coast. The project faces an early challenge navigating the Caledonian Canal, but a train ferry proves an ingenious solution. The team must also apply full-size railway technology to the task of traversing Loch Lochy.

9.00 SAS: Who Dares Wins. New series. Reality show in which people are put through SAS recruitment tests to see whether they can match up to the pressures the elite regiment faces. This time, the show comes from Morocco's Atlas Mountains, and chief Instructor Ant Middleton and his Directing Staff have comes up with an intensified course for the 25 volunteers.

10.00 Film: The Sweeney. (2012) An insubordinate detective and his loyal partner must crack a robbery case while under investigation from their superiors. Crime thriller, starring Ray Winstone and Ben Drew.

12.10 Film: Moonrise Kingdom. (2012) Comedy drama, with Bruce Willis and Edward Norton. **1.55** Grand Designs Australia. (R) **2.50** Location, Location, Location. (R) **3.45** KOTV Boxing Weekly. **4.15** Coast vs Country. (R) **5.10** Four in a Bed. (R) **5.35** Countdown. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **6.20** Poppy Cat. (R) **6.35** Wissper. (R) **6.40** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.45** Milkshake! Bopping About. (R) **6.50** Simon. (R) **6.55** Peppa Pig. (R) **7.00** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.15** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.25** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.35** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.40** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.05** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.25** Nella the Princess Knight. **8.40** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.55** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.05** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.25** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.40** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.45** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.20** Pets Make You Laugh Out Loud. **10.40 Film:** Groundhog Day. (1993) **12.40 Film:** Practical Magic. (1998) **2.40** Will & Grace. (R) **3.10** Blind Date. (R) **4.15 Film:** The Love Punch. (2013)

6.00 The Two Ronnies: In Their Own Words. A celebration of the lives and careers of comedy duo Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett, featuring performances, chat show appearances and rare and long-forgotten archive material. (R)

8.00 Aviva Premiership Rugby Highlights. Mark Durden-Smith and David Flatman present action from the 13th round of matches, including Worcester Warriors v Bath, Northampton Saints v Gloucester, and Wasps v Saracens.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Celebrity Big Brother. Highlights of another day for the illustrious inhabitants as they cope with the day-to-day complications of life under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother.

10.00 Film: Hot Pursuit. (2015) Premiere. An uptight police officer has to protect a gangster's widow as they go on the run from hitmen and corrupt cops. Crime comedy, with Reese Witherspoon.

11.00 5 News Update.

11.05 Film: Hot Pursuit. (2015) Concluded.

11.50 One Night with My Ex. Former couples decide if they should get back together, including Jay and Sandy, whose passionate relationship ended when she heard rumours he had been unfaithful. (R)

12.50 Lip Sync Battle UK: Jimmy Carr vs Alexander Armstrong. (R) **1.15** SuperCasino. **3.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors. (R) **4.00** Now That's Funny! (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Only Connect **7.30** Britain on Film: Messing About in Boats **8.00** Dan Snow on Lloyd George: My Great Great Grandfather **9.00** Engineering Giants: Ferry Strip-Down **10.00** The Bridge: Fifty Years Across the Forth **11.00 Film:** Stations of the Cross (2014) **12.45** Dan Snow on Lloyd George: My Great Great Grandfather **1.45** Engineering Giants: Ferry Strip-Down **2.45** The Bridge: Fifty Years Across the Forth **3.45** Close

ITV2

12.35 Take Me Out **1.40** The Voice UK **3.20 Film:** The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor (2008) **4.50** FYI Daily **4.55 Film:** The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor (2008) **5.25 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001) **6.25** FYI Daily **6.30 Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001) **9.00** Ibiza Weekender **10.00** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.30 Film:** Delivery Man (2013) **1.35** FYI Daily **1.40 Film:** Delivery Man (2013) **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV3

11.35 Foyle's War **5.50** Endeavour **8.00** Les Dawson: An Audience With That Never Was **9.00** Tonight at the London Palladium **10.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **12.00** Midsomer Murders **1.50** Executed **2.45** Road to Avonlea **4.35** On the Buses **5.30** ITV3 Nightscreen

ITV4

11.25 Pawn Stars **1.45 Film:** The Sea Wolves (1980) **2.50** FYI Daily **2.55 Film:** The Sea Wolves (1980) **4.10 Film:** Khartoum (1966) **5.10** FYI Daily **5.15 Film:** Khartoum (1966) **6.50** Hornblower **9.00 Film:** Ransom (1996) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10 Film:** Ransom (1996) **11.30 Film:** RoboCop 3 (1993) **12.30** FYI Daily **12.35 Film:** RoboCop 3 (1993) **1.35** The Professionals **2.35** The Protectors **3.00** Teleshopping

E4

12.00 Film: The Borrowers (1997) **1.40** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **2.00** The Big Bang Theory **7.00 Film:** Titanic (1997) **10.50 Film:** American Reunion (2012) **1.05** Gogglebox **2.10** First Dates **3.15** Rude Tube **3.40** Hollyoaks

Film4

11.00 Stuart Little (1999) **1.00** Robots (2005) **2.40** Antz (1998) **4.20** Home Alone (1990) **6.25** The Core (2003) Sci-fi thriller, starring Aaron Eckhart. **9.00** Die Hard 2 (1990) Action thriller sequel, starring Bruce Willis. **11.25** Savages (2012) **2.00** The Pool (2007) **4.00** Close

Just the ticket for Parrys International at open day

Commercial feature

Multiple award winning coach holiday company – Parrys International, will open its doors to the public on Sunday January 14 for its very popular annual open day.

With the release of the new 2018 brochures, the company is inviting members of the public to view their premises, luxury coaches and meet some of their international hotel and attraction providers.

It also gives the chance for people to gain information from the many staff – drivers and couriers – who will be on hand to help visitors experience and see the luxury coach features that are unique to the company.

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A German wine queen will be at the day

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The company have also introduced a huge choice of new day excursions with departures for its many destinations operating throughout the year.

The open Day runs from 10am until 3pm and is hosted at their garage and offices in Landywood Green, Cheslyn Hay.

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Killer Mom, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Premiere. When 14-year-old Allison loses her father in a plane crash a few years after her adoptive mother died, she is devastated. At the funeral, she is shocked to meet her birth mother Jessica, who is intent on controlling the $40m her daughter is set to inherit. Thriller, starring Karen Cliche. (2017)

TUESDAY
Eyewitness, Channel 5, 3.15pm
After her testimony sent him to jail, a woman finds herself held captive in her own home when the man who murdered her father and fiancee escapes from prison to confront her. Thriller, starring Lindy Booth, Craig Olejnik and Jon McLaren. (2017)

WEDNESDAY
The Social Network, Channel 4, 1.10am
Fact-based drama following internet billionaire Mark Zuckerberg's rise to wealth and fame. An online prank played on an ex-girlfriend gives Harvard student Zuckerberg the idea for Facebook, which soon expands away from the famous university into a worldwide phenomenon. However, in getting his project off the ground, he makes enemies of those who helped him along the way. With Jesse Eisenberg, Andrew Garfield and Justin Timberlake. (2010)

The Social Network, Wednesday, Channel 4, 1.10am

THURSDAY
Dear Diary, I Died, Channel 5, 3.15pm
When a college student appears to have committed suicide, her sister tries to uncover the secrets behind her death. Thriller, starring Katherine Kelly Lang, Whitney Rose Pynn and John J York. Edited for language. (2016)

FRIDAY
Amy, Channel 4, 12.10am
Documentary portrait of soul, jazz and R'n'B singer-songwriter Amy Winehouse, whose untimely death in July 2011 followed a well-publicised history of drugs and alcohol abuse. Director Asif Kapadia traces Amy's rise and demise over the 13 years preceding her death, telling her story via her music and autobiographical song lyrics. (2015).

PICK OF THE WEEK

The boys are back in town for a thrilling new series

When ITV launched the action drama series Lethal Weapon last year, a lot of viewers were initially sceptical about its chances of success. For a start, it's rare for US series to be shown on the channel in primetime – even the acclaimed The Americans struggled in the ratings and was eventually moved to ITV Encore.

And then there's the fact that Lethal Weapon was based on a hugely successful movie franchise – would viewers be able to accept a Riggs and Murtaugh who were played by anyone other than Mel Gibson and Danny Glover?

It seems even actor Clayne Crawford, who plays the Gibson role of loose cannon Riggs, didn't expect audiences to share his enthusiasm for the show.

He told Collider: "I read the script on a plane and I had that moment of being a 12-year-old boy, who just wants to play cowboys and superheroes. I was like, 'This is a cowboy superhero!' I called my wife and said, 'Look, I think I'm gonna say yes, but there's no way it will make it past three episodes.'"

Luckily, he was proved wrong. Not only did US audiences take the revamped Lethal Weapon to their hearts, but so did UK viewers – meaning not only is there a second season, but it's now back on ITV.

For anyone who missed the first series (or the films that inspired it), it focuses on the cop duo of Riggs, a reckless former Navy SEAL who moved to LA following the deaths of his wife Miranda and their unborn child, and Murtaugh (Damon Wayans), a steady family man who returned to the force following a heart attack.

The previous run ended with Murtaugh discovering just how far Riggs was prepared to go in pursuit of his wife's killers.

In this opening episode, Riggs is in Mexico, where he plans to avenge Miranda's death and finish off Tito Flores (Danny Mora) once and for all – but the cop's loyal partner is on his trail.

Once the duo are back in the US, they face some tough questions due to the ongoing investigation into Flores' activities – and Murtaugh's family also have a few points they'd like to get cleared up.

Meanwhile, Captain Avery (Kevin Rahm) is questioned by Internal Affairs about the integrity of his department.

But if the Miranda storyline does get wrapped up, can we expect a calmer, more responsible Riggs in the rest of season 2?

It seems not, as Crawford says that the forthcoming episodes will reveal that some of his character's problems predate the tragic loss of his family. Speaking to Collider, he said: "The beauty of TV is that you have 22 hours to tell a story, so we're gonna really find out who Riggs is and who he was before, and go into his childhood to see that it started out bad.

"I don't think we ever want Riggs healthy. The more Riggs is a mess, the more fun it is."

Lethal Weapon, Friday, ITV, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Silent Witness
BBC1, 9pm
New series. Part one of two. Nikki struggles to come to terms with life back home and seeks out fellow pathologist Sally Vaughan for support, only to learn she is nowhere to be found. National Crime Agency investigator Guy Bernhardt asks Nikki to help him by employing pathologist David Cannon, the chief suspect in Sally's disappearance. Meanwhile, a body found in a reservoir is linked to a murder case from 16 years previously. Return of the crime drama, starring Emilia Fox, with Julian Rhind-Tutt and Alex Macqueen.

TUESDAY
Working Class White Men
Channel 4, 10pm
The first of a two-part documentary in which Professor Green finds out what life in modern Britain is like for working-class men in different parts of the country. He begins by meeting Lewis, who has his heart set on going to Cambridge University but is up against a culture of low expectations, Essex boy Denzil, an aspiring entrepreneur with numerous money-making schemes on the go, and unemployed David, who is currently living in a homeless hostel in Bolton and is on the verge of becoming involved in far-right politics.

WEDNESDAY
Kiri
Channel 4, 9pm
Two Bafta-winners – Jack Thorne, the writer behind National Treasure, and actress Sarah Lancashire, who picked up awards for Happy Valley and Last Tango in Halifax – team up for this highly anticipated new drama. Lancashire stars as Miriam, a no-nonsense social worker who takes an instinctive approach to protecting the children in her care. But her methods are called into question when she arranges for Kiri, a black girl who is about to be adopted by her white foster family, to have an unsupervised visit with her biological grandparents, only for the youngster to then disappear. The police, the press and even her colleagues seem to blame Miriam, but as the media spotlight intensifies, both sets of families also face some difficult questions.

THURSDAY
Big Cats
BBC1, 8pm
We are in a golden age of natural world television. However, of all the rare and fascinating creatures that have been caught on camera of late, there is still one group of animals that enthral us more than any other - the big cats. They are the planet's top predators, yet even in this remarkable animal family, some members stand out. The African lion, for example, is the only wild cat that lives in large family groups, and in Ruaha, Tanzania, we see how they form huge 'super prides' in order to hunt giants. There is also revealing footage of a tiny rusty spotted cat in Sri Lanka, a lynx surviving the bitterly cold winter in Canada, an African leopard raising her cub, and perhaps the world's most lonesome cat, the snow leopard, searching for a mate in the Himalayas.

Transformation Street, Thursday, ITV, 9pm

Transformation Street
ITV, 9pm
From firemen to soldiers, railway workers to writers, this three-part series follows the extraordinary transformations of men and women who all believe they were born into the wrong body. Filmed over a 12-month period, cameras have been given unprecedented access to a private clinic on Wimpole Street in London, run by world-renowned plastic surgeon Christopher Inglefield. Tonight we meet 20-year-old Lucas, who was born a girl but has been living as a man for two years. He arrives at the clinic with his mum Karen, for a consultation about having his breasts removed. Railway worker Wendy, 43, is also about to undergo her gender confirmation surgery at the clinic. After counting down the days for thirty years, Wendy is determined to have the female body that she felt should have been hers at birth and to have her male genitals removed.

FRIDAY
The Wine Show
Channel 5, 7pm
New series. Actors Matthew Goode and James Purefoy travel to the south of France to find wines to accompany a six-course lunch chosen by Michelin-starred chef Stephane Reynaud.

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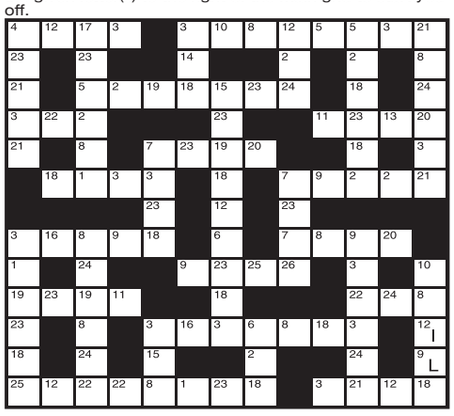
BRAIN GYM

No.461

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



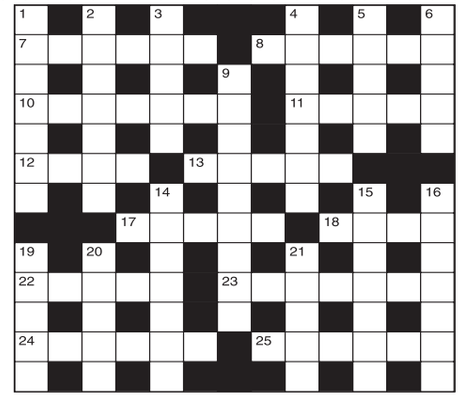
1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9 L	22
10	23
11	24
12 I	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1 O	2 F	3 H	4 T	5 M	6 Z	7 A	8 U	9 D	10 P	11 V	12 Y	13 X
14 K	15 B	16 J	17 R	18 N	19 G	20 W	21 I	22 E	23 L	24 C	25 S	26 Q

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.



Cryptic Clues:

Across

7. Changes which should be made by wrongdoers (6)
8. The source of a writer's material (6)
10. Send a boat down for coal (7)
11. Piece of land is on lease (5)
12. Some pay earned for a period (4)
13. Hides one's relatives on board (5)
17. A view that makes sense (5)
18. A pressing need (4)
22. Unusually eager to come to terms (5)
23. Smoke and produce an angry reaction (7)
24. Something to read in bed? (6)
25. They work to avoid discord (6)

Down

1. It sees or can be seen in the dark (4,3)
2. It has no meaning (7)
3. Revises information about tides (5)
4. Sensing change they finish top of the staff perhaps (7)
5. Upset to make light of (5)
6. Speak for the government? (5)
9. It may be adjusted for the rest of the holiday (4,5)
14. Generous in providing a form of Braille (7)
15. There are all types in his trade (7)
16. Concentrated in a nervous way (7)
19. One with no faith in father backing a horse (5)
20. Body in the baggage (5)
21. Brush and clean thoroughly (5)

Quick Clues:

Across

7. Mend (6)
8. Hurry (6)
10. Guard (7)
11. Pamphlet (5)
12. Pitcher (4)
13. Underneath (5)
17. Ill-defined (5)
18. Independent (4)
22. Depress (5)
23. Honest (7)
24. Noiseless (6)
25. Style (6)

Down

1. Seer (7)
2. Against (7)
3. Compare (5)
4. Wariness (7)
5. Filch (5)
6. Concord (5)
9. Energetic (9)
14. Tramp (7)
15. Bandit (7)
16. Bonds (7)
19. Near (5)
20. Reside (5)
21. Fracture (5)

Sudoku

	3	5	7		9			2
6		9				1		
8				5	1			3
				3		8		
	5		2		7			
		4		8				6
7			4					
		3			2	9		7
4		1	5		6	2	3	

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

7	2	6	4	9	3	8	1	5
4	1	5	6	8	2	3	7	9
9	3	8	5	1	7	6	4	2
5	6	1	3	4	9	7	2	8
3	4	7	2	5	8	1	9	6
2	8	9	1	7	6	5	3	4
6	5	2	7	3	4	9	8	1
1	9	3	8	2	5	4	6	7
8	7	4	9	6	1	2	5	3

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Poker; 4 Varnish; 8 Opinion; 9 Cream; 10 Lees; 11 Fortress; 13 Book; 14 Flog; 16 Tranquil; 17 Heat; 20 Chide; 21 Embargo; 22 Lighter; 23 Thyme.
Down: 1 Problematical; 2 Knife; 3 Rail; 4 Vendor; 5 Recitals; 6 Iceberg; 7 Home sweet home; 12 Conquest; 13 Bearing; 15 Linear; 18 Early; 19 Abut.
QUICK - Across: 1 Rival; 4 Diverts; 8 Fatuous; 9 Ledge; 10 Idle; 11 Profound; 13 Etna; 14 Heat; 16 Archives; 17 Part; 20 Irate; 21 Elevate; 22 Natural; 23 Dress.
Down: 1 Refrigeration; 2 Vital; 3 Loot; 4 Desert; 5 Vilified; 6 Redoubt; 7 Steadfastness; 12 Engineer; 13 Enchant; 15 Reveal; 18 Abate; 19 Send.

Quiz

1. In which bay is the island of Capri?
2. Which soprano was born Helen Porter Mitchell?
3. In which city were the Plymouth Brethren founded?
4. In which Austrian city was Mozart born?
5. What was the Beatles' own record label called?
6. Which city's Roman name was Durovernum?
7. Which Royal's middle names are Elizabeth Alice Louise?
8. Which Radio 4 show did Kenneth Robinson present for 15 years?
9. Of what is the tog a unit of measurement?
10. Of which country was Victor Emmanuel proclaimed king in 1861?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Edward VII; 2 White dove; 3 Grampians; 4 Crimean; 5 A tree; 6 Woody Woodpecker; 7 Bob Dylan; 8 Sarajevo; 9 Henrik Ibsen; 10 Vega.

Niner: FLOUNDERS

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

12736 gives a fish,
2933458 gives a second fish,
2769 gives a third fish.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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Aladdin

Already a smash-hit on Broadway, this fantastic show follows the story of a rakish street urchin-turned-handsome-prince in Disney's lavish musical production of Aladdin, now at the Prince Edward Theatre.

Directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw (The Book of Mormon), Aladdin the Musical gives you the catchy songs from the classic Disney film plus new material by Alan Menken (Beauty and the Beast) with lyrics by Howard Ashman (Beauty and the Beast) and Sir Tim Rice (The Lion King).

London Theatre Break

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Kinky Boots

Faced with bankruptcy due to competition from foreign sources, one small village's shoe factory owner embarks on a daringly different business strategy, ladies' shoes in men's sizes for the drag queen and cross-dresser market.

This true story, which in 2005 was released as a successful film, is the tale of W.J. Brooks Ltd of Earls Barton, Northampton, and its startling move into fetish footwear under the "Divine" brand. With an original score by Cyndi Lauper, this story then became a multiple Tony-award winning Broadway show, later crossing the Atlantic to London's Adelphi Theatre.

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Why carvery did not pack a Punch

THE staff were brilliant. The chef at the carvery was cracking jokes about venison and Bambi.

The guy at the bar was having a meltdown within 10 minutes of opening and the front of house staff were directing customers like traffic cops at a busy road junction.

The Punch Bowl Inn, at Bridgnorth, offers a multi-award-winning AGA Carvery, decent value for money and delightful local ales. It's steeped in tradition, serves quality traditional food and drink and has been recognised by the local Camra branch for real ale.

And while it offers function rooms, a venue for weddings, guest rooms, a la carte menus and more, it's best known for its Sunday lunches.

SENSIBLE

Try calling on a Sunday morning and you're likely to be told: 'Sorry, we're full'. I know. I've tried. This time I took the sensible option and booked well in advance.

When my friend and I arrived for a Sunday service, a queue had formed outside shortly before the venue's 12 noon opening. On a cool, crisp winter's morning, they hovered near to the Punch Bowl's garden, which provides magnificent views across the countryside.

As the clock struck 12, a click of the latch signalled the start of service and the early bird arrivals shuffled inside. All of which meant the bar resembled the check-in desk for a Ryanair flight to Alicante during mid-Summer.

Lunch at the Punch Bowl isn't quite a bun fight. It's far too civilised for that. But there's something curious about going out to eat then forming an orderly queue, like Soviet-era Russians waiting for bread. The serving area is a vast, heated pass, behind which stands an AGA. Vast joints of roasted meat waiting for customers while large bowls of vegetables and sides offer further sustenance. Our options were beef, turkey, pork, ham and venison, sliced by a cheerful chef with Shropshire's sharpest knife – and tongue. When my friend asked for venison, he quipped: "Nice, eating a bit of Bambi, are we?" Boom. Boom.

Variety of vegetables along with different potato dishes

The Sunday special roast lunch proves very popular

He garlanded my plate with a slice of beef, a tender piece of sweet, pink ham and a less-than-impressive piece of pork, which was much too fatty. And then we strolled past the Punch Bowl serving bowls, garnishing our plates with roast potatoes, parsnips, peas, carrots, garlic potatoes, Yorkshire puddings and more. The roast potatoes were good, though they'd lost a little of their crunch by standing on the pass. The parsnips were a treat, nicely caramelised and pleasingly sweet. The peas and carrots were a little too watery but the garlicky potatoes and cauliflower cheese were great. The Yorkshire puddings were nicely risen while a range of sauces – cranberry, apple, gravy et al – were suited to all-comers.

But it wasn't as enjoyable as it ought to have been. The gravy didn't pack a punch. The apple sauce wasn't particularly sharp. And though the garlic potatoes and cauliflower cheese were pleasant, other bits were bland.

The biggest problem was that the food – with the exception of the meat – was luke warm, not piping hot, and lost a little along the way.

We skipped desserts. We felt like we'd been the participants in some form of Food Olympics and there was insufficient room for a round of sweetened carbs. And as the other guests continued to tuck into their carvery dinners while the staff prepared for the 2pm sitting, we made our exit.

ANDY RICHARDSON

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PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO HOME BUYING AND LETTING

Three-bedroomed house unexpectedly back on the market

Unexpectedly back on the property market, this charming three-bedroomed semi-detached house in Albright Road, Oldbury, is for sale through loveyourpostcode.com at offers over £159,950.

It has an entrance hall, a reception room, a breakfast kitchen, three bedrooms and a bathroom.

Well placed for shops and Barnford Hill Park, it lies in an excellent local area for schooling, travel routes and local shops, which are all within a few minutes walk or drive.

Its accommodation includes a small entrance hallway. Off this is the main reception room. Of a lovely size, this cosy yet spacious room has laminated flooring and features décor wallpaper. Views of the rear and front garden can be enjoyed from two bay windows.

The kitchen and combined dining area is in a modern style and neatly finished with black slate work surfaces and a breakfast bar island.

Up to the first floor, the master bedroom is the largest. The second bedroom is also of good space, and the third room is also a double. The family bathroom is the final room on the first floor, featuring a three piece including a bath, sink and WC.

The local area has schooling within 10 minutes walk such as Moat Farm infant school, St Huberts Catholic primary school and Bristnall Academy. The nearest bus stop is the 48 & 48a allowing you to commute all over Smethwick and the local train station is Langley Green, which is just a five minutes drive away.

loveyourpostcode.com are expecting a great deal of interest to be shown in the sale of this property, and are urging interested buyers to book their viewings fast.

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- Unexpectedly back on the market
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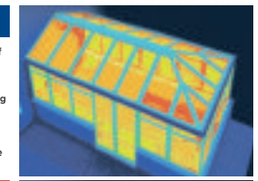
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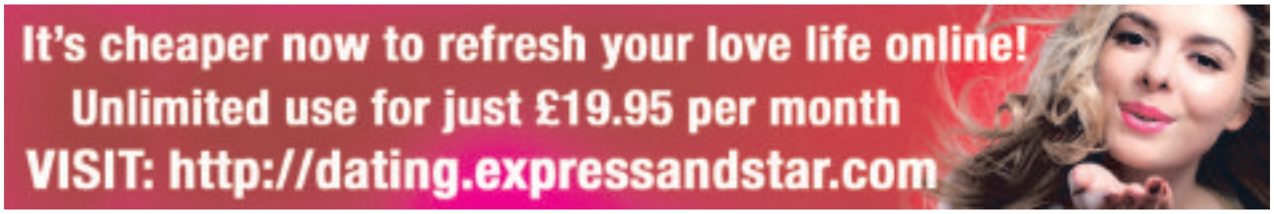

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MELANIE, attractive lady, 38yrs, hoping to meet a nice chap, any age, for chats, non complicated times. Must have great soh, looks unimportant. **Text Only. Box: 4037147**

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AMANDA, 36yrs, attractive lady. Solvent and well educated and spoken. Feminine figure with large breasts. Hoping to meet a broad-minded gent, any age for discreet relationship. I don't mind if you are married or single. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3035 Box: 429287**

HEATHER, single, very attractive brunette, 34, sensual and interesting, looking to add to life's experiences and adventures with professional male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429647**

ANGELA, 48yrs, seeks no strings casual fun. I have my own house, car and am solvent. I'm busty with a firm figure. You must be open minded, age/status unimportant. **Tel: 0906 515 3015 Box: 427633**

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MARIELLE, 45yrs, curvy attractive lady, likes older men. I'm married so you must be discreet. Lets meet up, and make each other smile again. Call me and lets get to know each other. **Tel: 0906 515 3039 Box: 426853**

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JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. **Tel: No: 0906 515 3011 Box: 409715**

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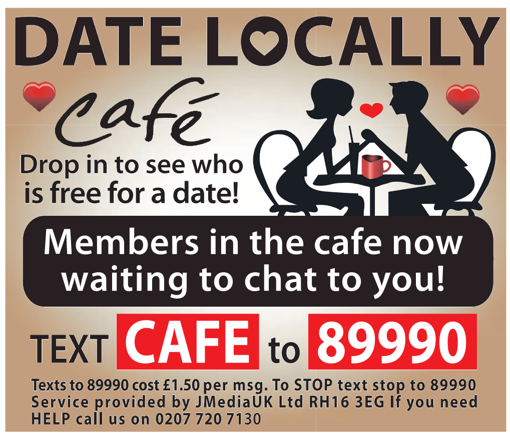

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TAMIKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded. Pls call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3007 Box 422365**

ATTRACTIVE widowed lady, 70yrs but looks much much younger. GSOH, fun loving. WLTM man 67+ for loving tender relationship. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429327**

HARRIETT 42yrs, blue eyed brunette with long lets and decent curves! Looking for a cheeky adventurous man for fun only. I live alone so can accommodate and can travel. Discretion assured. ACA. Give me a try. **Tel: 0906 515 3031 Box 426205**

JACKIE 40, slim easygoing blonde, works too hard, needs sincere male to help liven up her free time. Looks/status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429381**

CAROLINE, 42yrs, well educated, sophisticated "some call me posh" married lady, looking for no strings midweek liaisons. **Tel: 0906 515 3027 Box 427533**

JAN 47, once bitten twice shy! Just looking for non complicated fun times. Attractive, discreet, OHAC, you won't be disappointed. Any age/looks/status. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429453**

SAMANTHA, 35yrs, attractive brunette with own business, seeks adventurous gent for casual relationship. **Tel: 0906 515 3035 Box 425979**

JULIE, attractive early 40s brunette, size 10, varied interests, WLTM male for fun times, good conversations, spoiling and maybe more. Status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429401**

CARMEL, open minded naughty lady seeks a broad minded strict man to unleash her wilder side. Age/looks unimportant but no time wasters please. **Tel: 0906 515 3043 Box 426851**

VALERIE, caring thoughtful lady. Attractive with GSOH. Seeking similar gent. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429163**

MARGARET 42, busty chubby female WLTM Muslim men, Pakistani, Kurdish or Indian welcome, daytime/evening, no strings. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 5838907**

TAMMY, sincere mature lady, easygoing animal lover. Loves travel, eating out etc. Call me if you are interested in a chat. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429333**

RACHAEL, 44yrs, loves life, varied interests, GSOH, kind and attractive. Seeks similar male of any age. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429323**

LISA, 50yrs, curvy honey blonde lady. Loves life. Hoping to meet a kind gent of any age. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429321**

FEMALE 67, smoker, enjoys music, TV, meals out/in, looking for male 68-75 for friendship maybe more. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 5877942**

SUE, 44, country loving lady, tall, slim, looking for similar country gent to share adventures in the great outdoors with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429251**

ELIZABETH, 45, fed up with lonely nights! Blonde blue eyed, no children/ties, WLTM someone for cosy nights in and TLC. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429221**

SHARON, 48, tall slim attractive, lives alone with no ties, love romanticising and WLTM man for good times together, maybe more. Any age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429125**

ATTRACTIVE lady, 70yrs young, slim, fit and young for my age. I'm hoping to meet a kind gent, must have GSOH, age/looks unimportant. Must be smart and good company. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429039**

TINA, 58yrs, slim, passionate and kind. Loves eating out. Hoping to meet gent 55-63. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429167**

JANE, 49yrs, own home, loves nature, artistic. Love to socialise. WLTM gent any age, must have GSOH. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429165**

JANE, 47, confident full figured and all woman, likes cosy nights in with that special person, looking for friendship maybe more. Age/looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428905**

Single Men

MATTHEW, 38, Christian, regular church goer, seeks like-minded lady. Seeks non-smoker, kind, honest lady for LTR. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6134936**

ROYSTON, 65, first time advertiser, West Brom based, tall, very fit and agile, N/S, car owner, seeks lady for going out, relationship etc. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429725**

GENUINE male, 39, short dark hair, 5ft 8ins. Enjoys sport, gym, walking, nights out, cinema. Hoping to meet genuine female. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 5338852**

SINGLE man, 56yrs, 5'10, average build, looking to meet lady for fun times. Nothing complicated. Bored housewives welcome. **Text only replies. 6134456**

MALE, 60 & married, seeks lady, any age/status etc for discreet one to one liaison. **Text only replies. 4252649**

HEY ladies! Want to know more? Send me a text! **Text only replies. 4461945**

JEFF, 60s, tall, fit, young outlook, N/S, car owner, seeks similar lady for friendship, outings out etc. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428175**

MALE, mid 50s, N/S, semi retired, slim build, likes walking, holidays, occasional drinks, films, good chats, enjoys life, looking to meet a female, N/S, 50 plus, for friendship and going out. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429637**

COLIN, 50, seeks kind, caring, loving cuddly large lady 40-60 for LTR and love. Likes cuddles and kisses. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6091169**

RETIRED fitness instructor 65, would like to meet lady for friendship, company, on a regular basis. First ever advert. Beeston area. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6118348**

GENT, 65, seeks discreet lady, for special times, mutually beneficial to both, with that special lady. Wolverhampton and surrounding areas. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 427529**

STEVE, 43 years old, 5ft 7ins, slim, non-smoker, smart casual dresser would like to meet a similar lady. Age and looks unimportant. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6116902**

MATURE, oriental female sought by easygoing male, 73, for NSA friendship. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6117412**

AMATEUR photographer, single, seeking bored broad-minded lady to have some discreet fun with a camera. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6109868**

100% genuine, good looking blue eyed guy, 40s, looking to meet a black or mixed race lady, for romance and maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428913**

64 year old male, WLTM a lady between 60-75, for friendship and outings. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419929**

TALL, dark, attractive Shropshire male, 57, WLTM an attractive female, for discreet daytime fun and excitement. Any age or status. Can travel. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429301**

COLIN, 50, kind, loving, seeks kind loving, cuddly, large lady, 45-55, for LTR, love and romance. Must like hugs, kisses, cuddles and holding hands. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6091169**

ATTRACTIVE male, 56, 6ft, WLTM an attractive female, any age, for discreet fun and intimate times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428109**

HI I am a single Indian male in my 50s, and would like to meet a mature female 55+ for a NSA friendship. **Text only replies. Box no: 4627019**

WALSALL male, looking for no strings adult fun, with lady of any nationality, colour or age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 428773**

MALE, age 68, very active looking for lady for NSA fun. Can accommodate. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6026972**

EASYGOING likeable man likes a drink at the pub, and nights in front of the telly and a cuddle, looking for lady 45-55. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6066059**

DERBY male, young 57, looking for uncared, unloved married woman looking for discreet adult fun 35-55. Txt me for a good time. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 5321154**

MALE seeks affectionate, tactile, no drama, down to earth woman for nights in/out and loads of cuddles. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418695**

ADVENTUROUS 36 year old, slim, dark hair, has many interests, seeks female for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417235**

Follow us on twitter @DATElocally

MALE would like to meet local female 50/60 for mutual friendship. I'm easygoing and have many interests. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 5071056**

COLIN 72, from Burntwood, looking for loving lady for days out, holidays and company. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 4880436**

MALE, 20s, seeks NSA fun with female. I love a laugh, age isn't important. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6042304**

Gay Singles

Join our Gay online service ***FREE*** visit: ***localgaydate.co.uk***

GAY attractive feminine female would like to meet other gay feminine females for friendship possible relationship. Get in touch. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 6062854**

MALE, tall, slim, 60ish, would love to meet males for fun times in the West Midlands. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429563**

MALE bi guy, 70, seeking similar aged guy with daytime accommodation, for mutual fun. Glos area. **Text only replies. Mailbox: 4171960**

Just Friends

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

FRIENDSHIP Retired Stoke on Trent lady, 70s, enjoys adventurous holidays abroad, WLTM like minded person, male or female, to share holiday experiences and expenses. Please reply to my box number. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 429685**

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

CALL CHARGES*: DATING 18+ and have the bill payer's permission. 0844 calls cost 7 pence per min, 090 calls cost £1.55 per min, plus your phone company's access charge. Calls are recorded and may appear on your bill. TEXT*: Text alerts are charged at £1.50 per week. To unsubscribe to text alerts, text DATING STOP to 63333. To cancel free match alerts, text STOP to 07781474042. For full T&Cs go to www.localdates-terms.co.uk/. REPLY BY TEXT*: 80098/89990 costs £1.50 per SMS received (max 150 characters). Guaranteed up to 4 messages for each message you send, Service only available where phone icon shown. Messages are moderated. Minimum 7 messages must be sent before contact details can be exchanged. This service is not computer generated. All messages are responded to by real service users. No meetings can be guaranteed. If arranging a meeting be sure to choose a public space and do not give personal details to people you have not met. To STOP text stop to 80098/89990. Service provided by No Goats Ltd. Help: 0207 720 7130. ALL SERVICES*: By texting any shortcode you consent to the owner of that shortcode sending you the occasional marketing message. To opt out of receiving these send NO INFO to 80098. DATA PROTECTION: Service provided by JMedia UK Ltd, RH16 3EG, 0207 720 7130. We will collect the details you provide and may send you details of other services and events operated by us. We may pass your details onto this newspaper for marketing or PhonePayPlus for regulatory purposes. Advertisers may come from our national database and from our pdc app, your ad may also appear on our dating app. wc. 01/01/18

Classified Ads

Buy Local, **Sell** Local

Index

1 Family
2 Leisure Time
3 Home & Services
4 Pets & Animals
5 Business & Farming
6 Property
7 Jobs
8 Motoring
9 Local Information
10 Personals

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Funeral Directors

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In your time of need we'll take care of all the funeral arrangements.

- Est. 1907
- 24 hour service

G. Gibbs
Funeral Directors
44 All Saints Way
West Bromwich B71 1PZ
0121 553 0442
Dignity CARING FUNERAL SERVICES
Part of Dignity plc. A British Company.

2 Leisure Time

holidays

Travel Abroad

READERS ARE REMINDED to check with any Advertisers that their holiday costs are fully covered by a recognised bonding or insurance scheme.

mind, body & soul

Massage

MOBILE Aromatherapy Massage Therapist Home / Hotel. To book appointments call 07437 569187.

3 Home & Services

Furniture

FURNITURE NOT SOLD? Donate it to Katharine House Hospice. We collect for free. Telephone Cannock 01543 466885, Stafford 01785 247630, House clearance service 01785 760715.

katharine house hospice enhancing life and living
Furniture not sold, why not donate it?
Reg charity number: 1011712
We can turn your quality used furniture into 1st class care for patients at Katharine House
Call us now on 01785 760715 for details or to arrange a FREE collection

Household Appliances

JANUARY CLEARANCE
AUTOS FROM £89, COOKERS, FRIDGE FREEZERS, ALL DOMESTIC APPLIANCES AT SALE PRICE!
— Past & Present —
24 - 26 church street, Bilston (opposite town hall).

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6x5 Lap Panels
£15 each (inc vat)
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Bloxwich Fencing Ltd
or 01922 712184

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CHESTNUT SHEDS AND FENCING LTD
Manufacturers and Suppliers of Heavy Duty Fully Tanalised Sheds, Summerhouses & All Garden Buildings.
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www.chestnutshedsandfencing.co.uk

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01922 712184

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ADVERTISERS ARE REMINDED
That the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

ASH RECLAMATION new and used building materials, upvc doors and windows 01543 453222.

ASH RECLAMATION
All reclaimed building materials
UPVC doors and windows
New and Used
Gatehouse Trading Est.
Lichfield Road, Brownhills, WS8 6JZ
01543 453222
07956 627367

Items Wanted

✔ CASH PAID ✔
£300+ PER OUNCE
FOR 9 CARAT GOLD.
ANY AMOUNT COLLECTED!
HOUSE CLEARANCES!
*gold coins, **pre - 47 silver** coins, **watches**, costume jewellery, porcelain, any **oriental items**, old brass items, any silver items, War **medals** military etc.*
Lady Buyer
Call: 01922 495066 or 07971 783206

READERS ARE ADVISED to carefully consider all of their options before agreeing to the sale of any of their items.

Loans

READERS ARE REMINDED that they may require professional advice before entering into obligations.

PC's, Laptops & Accessories

CLIENT COMPUTERS Certified technician and microsoft partner. Repair and maintain laptops and pcs. Virus removal, broken screens, wifi, windows problem etc. Laptops available. 0121 556 9481

CLIENT COMPUTERS
Certified technician & Microsoft partner.
Repair & maintain laptops and PCs. In West Midlands.
Virus removal, broken screens, wifi.
Windows problems etc.
Home visits or bring to me.
Long established.
Laptops available.
0121 556 9481

BUY LOCAL SELL LOCAL
01902 317878
ClassifiedAds

specialists at your service

Aerials

AA DIGITAL AERIALS Checkatrade.com
AERIALS FITTED FROM £79.99
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01543 439095 • 01922 716029

A AERIAL AND SKY SPECIALIST Digital aerials, CCTV cameras, TV wall mount fitted. 07850 330251.

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Steve - AA Digital Aerials

For great business results call
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ClassifiedAds Brought to you by Express & Star

Alarms/Security

PREMIER ALARMS
Supplied and Fitted £249
Servicing and Repairs
12 Months Warranty
All areas covered
All quotes beaten!
Call: 0121 601 9791

Appliance Repairs

A SAME DAY REPAIR - Cookers Autos Fridges Vacs and Micros. Call 07900 578897 / 07801 746853.

Bathrooms

BATHROOM DESIGN All bathrooms fitted, tiling, flooring, complete bathrooms: 07850 382548.

Building Services

APPROVED CONTRACTOR
All damp problems, roofing, all building & all plastering work.
Free quotes 07538 118034 or 01902 752161.

Building Supplies

RECLAIMED BRICKS, Tiles, Slates, Oakbeams, Flooring, York Stone. Cawarden 01889 574066. sales@cawardenreclaim.co.uk

Carpet Fitters

A CARPETS & VINYLS supplied or just fitted, quality samples brought to your home, no job too small, free quotes call Mark 01543 820598 / 07941 619694.

Driveways & Patios

P.W DRIVEWAYS
The Block Paving Specialists.
Patios, Driveways, Pathways etc.
SPECIAL OFFER £50 PSM (DECEMBER ONLY)
Free Quotes & Advice
0800 747 1435

Fencing

CLASSIFIEDS FOR YOU!

"I am extremely happy with the service I get from my Express & Star Classified Sales Representatives and would recommend them to anyone! They have done a very professional job with my website so I get online enquiries as well now."
Michael- Portway Fencing

For great business results call
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Gardening Services

Landywood Tree & Landscaping Services
All garden work, tree felling/lopping, pruning, hedges trimmed, turf, patios, fencing, block-paving etc.
www.landywoodlandscaping.co.uk
01922 898 710 / 07973 177 976

Gas Fitting

GAS SERVICES
- Boilers • Cookers
- Fires • Gas Checks
- Landlord Certificates
- Gas Leaks Traced

Fitted, Serviced and Repaired
Same Day Service
Free Quotes
DISCOUNTS FOR OAPs
Call: 01902 366855/ 07761 973975

READERS ARE ADVISED
To check that anyone carrying out any Gas work is Gas Safe Registered.
It is an offence under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 to carry out gas work in the UK without being on the Gas Safe Register.

Gates

ALL METAL GATES,RAILINGS, etc. Free quotes, also repairs & fitting. 07903 500642 24 hours.

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HANDY MAN - Most trades, plumbing, heating, gardening & decorating. Gutter clean no ladders, free quotes call 07497 826697.

YOUR LOCAL HANDYMAN
FREE QUOTES
All work guaranteed, Most trades covered, References available on request. No job too big or too small!
CALL MIKE: 07947 621047 0121 6010479

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A1 HOUSE CLEARANCE
Full, part and single rubbish removed.
Garage and sheds cleared.
Leather 3 piece suites and leather chesterfields wanted.
01922 492007

A1 HOUSE CLEARANCE
Full, part and single rubbish removed.
Garage and sheds cleared.
Leather 3 piece suites and leather chesterfields wanted.
01922 492007

A ABSOLUTE BEST cash price paid for house clearances and bereavements. Also removals undertaken. **07852 172641 / 07710 360327**

ALL ROUND CLEARANCE
Professional family run business
House clearances full or part, also garages, sheds etc.
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07794 912844

Kitchen Fitters

THE KITCHEN FITTER Over 20 years experience. Call 07881 654757 or 01543 373233.

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LADY DECORATOR Full house or one wall to customer requirements. Free quotes call: 07522 643706.

Plans Prepared

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For the very best in plastering and rendering, full rooms inc materials from 110. Halls, stairs and landings from 200
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ALL PLUMBING WORK UNDERTAKEN
No job too large. All work guaranteed.
Call Will for a free quote
07521 411108

PLUMBING WORK UNDERTAKEN No job too small or large. Call Will for a free quote on: 07521 411108.

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LETS TALK RUBBISH No Skips Needed.Load/Remove any Waste, House Clearance. 07969 628382

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Removals

KT HOUSE REMOVALS
12 years experience.
SINGLE ITEMS TO FULL LOADS.
LOCAL OR DISTANCE. FULLY INSURED.
Free Quotes - Call Ric on:
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KC REMOVALS We beat any quote, full or part loads, all areas. Anything considered. Call on 07867 862227.

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t.v. / home entertainment

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4 Pets & Animals

Guns & Dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS
Advertisers must ensure that they meet all necessary legal requirements for owning and using guns.

5 Business & Farming

business directory

Commercial Premises

UNITS AND OFFICE SPACE to let in Oldbury, West Bromwich and Walsall. Easy Terms. Ashmore Properties 0121 520 5318.

6 Property

Overseas Property

NOTICE TO READERS
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Fast Sale? Yes! Any House? Yes! Any Condition? Yes!

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ADVERT 2

ADVERT 3

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*Private advertisers only, no guns, pets, or livestock. Limited time only
Free adverts are published within 7 days of receipt, in-paper and online and are limited to 3 lines maximum

Buy Local, **Sell** Local
01902 317878

ClassifiedAds

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NOTICE TO READERS
It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

J9 Accommodation
NO DEPOSIT
★MOVE IN TODAY★
Studios
from £90pw*
Rooms
from £65pw*
*Includes Most Bills
CHECK WEBSITE FOR LIVE LIST
Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme
01902 213121
J9accommodation.com

7 Jobs

Full Time General

TAXI OFFICE OPERATOR Dudley area. Knowledge of local area and own transport would be an advantage. Experience preferred but not essential. Main hours, Fri/Sat 17.00 - 01.00. Email: ali.waterfrontcars@live.co.uk

8 Motoring

Cars Over £1500

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ABC AUTO SALVAGE WANTED URGENT
Scrap & MOT Failures Best Prices Paid ELV Registered Spares Always Available
0121 557 0800 or 0121 557 0400.
Oldbury Area.

spares & accessories

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MB MOTORS MOBILE MECHANIC MOT'S, Servicing, Tyres, Diagnostics, AC & Electrics. 07809 871733

MOBILE MOT TESTS Class 4 Car and Light commercials. Call 07901 655202

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• MOT'S • Diagnostics
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07809 871733
mbmotorsstaffordshire.co.uk
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Cars Under £1500

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ClassifiedAds

10 Personals

Personal

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expressandstar.co.uk

9 Local Information

Public Notices

ANNE (otherwise known as ANNIE) WILKINS (Deceased)
Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 121 Temple Meadow Road West Bromwich West Midlands B71 4BQ, who died on 15/10/2017, are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned Solicitors on or before 09/03/2018, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice.
ADCOCKS SOLICITORS LIMITED
27 Lombard Street Lichfield
Staffordshire WS13 6DP T519062

DOROTHY WITKA (Deceased)
Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 18 Clifford Road Bearwood West Midlands B67 5HU, who died on 21/11/2017, are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned Solicitors on or before 09/03/2018, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice.
ADCOCKS SOLICITORS LIMITED
27 Lombard Street Lichfield
Staffordshire WS13 6DP T519063

highways england

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 - SECTION 14(1)(a) THE M5 MOTORWAY (JUNCTION 5 TO M6 JUNCTION 8) (TEMPORARY RESTRICTION AND PROHIBITION OF TRAFFIC) ORDER 2018

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Highways England Company Limited (Company No. 9346363) intends to make an Order on the M5 Motorway, in the County of Worcestershire, the Metropolitan Borough of Sandwell and the, City of Birmingham, to allow lighting works, resurfacing, bridge repairs, structural and pavement inspections, traffic detection system and telecommunication installation, barrier repairs, and general maintenance works to be carried out.

The effect of the Order will be to, at different times, -

(1) impose a 50 miles per hour speed restriction on –
- (a) the northbound carriageway of the M5 from a point 500 metres south of the centreline of the A38 underbridge, at Junction 5, to a point 3 kilometres south of the Timberhonger Lane underbridge, at Bromsgrove;
- (b) the northbound carriageway of the M5 from a point 10 metres south of the centreline of the B4091 Stourbridge Road overbridge, near Bournheath to a point 1400 metres south of the centreline of the A458 Hagley Road West overbridge, north of Junction 3; and
- (c) the southbound carriageway of the M5 from a point 400 metres north of the centreline of the Penncricket Lane overbridge, south of Junction 2, to a point 500 metres north of the centreline of Carters Lane overbridge, at Junction 3; and

(2) close –
- (a) any slip road leading to or from the M5 at Junction 5 or Junction 4;
- (b) any slip road leading to or from the M5 to or from Frankley Motorway Services, near Junction 3;
- (c) the link road leading from the westbound carriageway of the M42 to the northbound carriageway of the M5, at Junction 4a; and
- (d) the link road leading from the westbound carriageway of the M42 to the southbound carriageway of the M5, at Junction 4a;

The work will be carried out in phases and is expected to start on Saturday 20 January 2018 and continue for four months. The carriageway closures and width restriction will be in operation overnight between 21:00 hours and 06:00 hours on weekdays, between 21:00 Fridays and 08:00 on Saturdays and between 21:00 hours Saturdays and 10:00 hours on Sundays. The slip road closures will be in operation overnight between 20:00 hours and 06:00 hours on weekdays, between 20:00 hours Fridays and 08:00 hours on Saturdays and between 20:00 hours Saturdays and 10:00 hours on Sundays. The speed restriction will be in operation twenty four hours a day for the duration of the works. The Order will come into force on 19 January 2018.

Vehicles being used for police, fire and rescue authority or ambulance purposes will be exempt from the speed restriction, closures and weight restriction. Vehicles being used for special forces purposes will be exempt from the speed restriction and vehicles being used for traffic officer purposes, in connection with the works or for winter maintenance purposes will be exempt from the closures and width restriction.

Diversion routes using alternative junctions of the M5, via the A456 and A4123 and vice versa; via the A4123, A4034, A457 and A4252 and vice versa; via the A41, A4444, A436, A454 and vice versa; and via the A41, A4031, A4041 and A34 and vice versa, will be signed.

For further information please contact Purnima Kaul on 0300 470 3140.

Karen Eustace, an officer in Highways England Company Limited.

Highways England Company Limited (Company No. 9346363) registered office: Bridge House, Walnut Tree Close, Guildford, GU1 4LZ. A Company registered in England and Wales.

Sandwell Chronicle Thursday, January 4, 2018

So many stand-out features in Audi

By Graham Breeze

These days you expect something exceptional from Audi and you certainly won't be disappointed by the A4 Avant 3.0 TDi Quattro.

Every time I drive an Audi I find myself asking what more the company could possibly do to improve the range and each time I hand the car back blown away by stunning levels of quality and improved technology.

The Avant comes with all the same home comforts we have come to expect from Audi but there are so many stand-out features which make you appreciate what a truly exceptional option this is.

Highlights include xenon headlights with LED daytime running lights, the Audi smartphone interface, rear parking sensors and electrically powered tailgate operation, plus protective equipment such as the Audi pre-sense collision avoidance system and multi-collision brake assist.

And then there's the Audi Virtual Cockpit with its pin-sharp fully digital display, MMI Navigation plus with MMI Touch, a head-up display and Matrix LED headlights.

The Audi A4 Avant quattro can also be ordered with one of the latest developments in driver assistance: adaptive cruise control with traffic jam assist. At speeds of up to 37 mph, the vehicle will accelerate, brake and steer independently, relieving stress on the driver in slow-moving traffic.

As part of the driver assistance pack customers can also take advantage of the predictive efficiency assistant, which helps drivers to reduce fuel consumption by up to 10 per cent by using navigation route data to adapt the cruise control system's pre-selected speed to the route and the speed limits for the most fuel efficient and comfortable journey.

There's a top quality feeling in the cabin

Engine sophistication is backed up by an advanced five-link front and rear suspension system meaning you can gobble up both motorway and country road situations effortlessly – it really is a driving joy.

Depending on preference, customers can increase the comfort by adding electronically modulated Adaptive Comfort Suspension with damping control, or choose Adaptive Sport Suspension with damping control for enhanced refinement with a greater emphasis on cornering composure.

It's impossible to tell how comfortable the driver would feel at the top speed of 152mph but you do feel secure enough when charging from 0-62mph in 8.4 seconds and recording combined fuel figures of just under 60mpg. You'll also be impressed by the CO2 emission figures of 129g/km.

Highlights include xenon headlights with LED daytime running lights

There are few better places to be than in the driver's seat of this latest Audi A4 offering. There's a top quality feel about everything inside the cabin and the virtual cockpit is as near as it gets to being at the controls of a fighter jet.

Seat adjustments mean you can easily find the most comfortable position and there's ample space for three rear seat passengers along with a huge boot, which easily copes with the golf clubs.

There's a price to pay for all this of course and the model on test had an on-the-road tag of £38,895 though this shot up to £49,000 when adding sports seats, parking assist, 19inch alloys, comfort, sound, vision and technology packs, adaptive sports suspension, heated front seats and folding door mirrors.

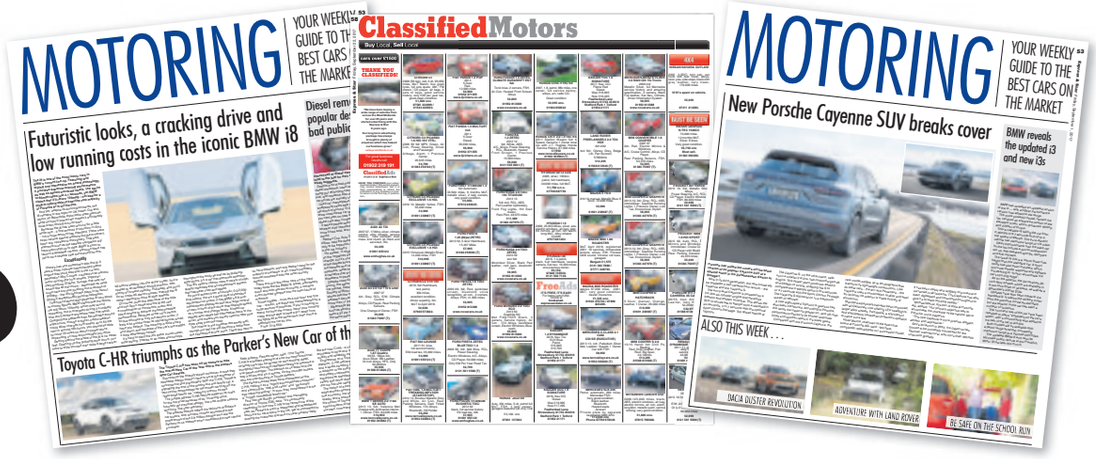
It's a shame that Audi feels that heated seats and folding door mirrors should be classed as extras on a model of this quality and I've often questioned the reasons for adding cost of a tank of fuel to the selling price.

Putting that to one side the A4 Avant 3.0Tdi Quattro is yet another gem from Audi.

EVERY FRIDAY!

MNA

New Car?



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MOTORING

Express & Star

Referee Bill Turley flanked by his assistants Harry Worrall and Terry Connolly

The ref is resplendent in white boots

Harry Worrall runs the line at age of 79

Terry Connolly, aged 72, keeps up with play

Match referee Bill Turley gives the red card to age

The cameras are rolling as the match officials are filmed

No signs of flagging from the men in black

THERE is no substitute for experience, so the old adage goes. And that was certainly the case when the officials trotted out for a recent clash in the Wolverhampton Sunday League.

The combined age of the men in black who took charge of the top-flight showdown between Penn Tandoori Sundats and AFC Jacks totalled 219 years.

Man in the middle Bill Turley clocked in at the tender age of 68 while his flag waving assistants, Terry Connolly and Harry Worrall, are 72 and 79 respectively.

And the occasion is set to gain national attention thanks to the presence of the Sky TV cameras.

Sky presenter Johnny Phillips, a columnist with The Chronicle's sister publication The Express & Star, was in attendance at Wolverhampton Casuals' Brinsford Lane having heard about the trio's appointment when he was guest speaker at a recent Wolverhampton Referees Association meeting.

Popular

The three wise men were brought to the screen over the festive period when they featured on the popular Soccer Saturday show hosted by Jeff Stelling.

And with the cameras rolling, the banter was soon flowing between the trio and Wolverhampton Referees Association chairman Phil Reade, the man responsible for appointing officials to Wolverhampton Sunday League games.

"Bill reckons the players say he looks like Gerry Francis, with his hair like that. I reckon it's more Peter Stringfellow!" quipped Phil.

"Bill is a larger than life character and Harry is really well known having been a referee for over 50 years, while Terry is probably the quieter one.

"All three of them are well respected around the local leagues and they enjoy a chat and a bit of banter with the players.

"It's great that they are getting some recognition for what they do and it's also good publicity for the league and the refs' association.

"We are the biggest association in the country and we have quite a number of refs who are aged 50 or above. This was a big game but I don't look at ages when I make the appointments. I just look at whether they can handle the game.

"All three of them are experienced refs who know how to handle players. And they did a good job, just don't remind me about Bill's white boots!"

The white boots will see plenty of action this season with Bill likely to clock up a century of games during the course of the campaign.

And the Pendeford-based former publican has no plans to call time on his refereeing days anytime soon.

"Since I retired and I am free in the week, my phone never stops ringing," said Bill, who was amateur with Wolves and whose son, Billy, played professionally as a goalkeeper for Northampton Town, Oxford and Rushden & Diamonds.

"I referee in the Wolverhampton Sunday, the Midland Junior Premier on Saturdays, the Midland Junior Floodlit League and also school and college games.

"Over the course of the season I will do over 100 games. I love it. I'm not a young man but I am fit for my age. I'm an ex semi-pro and I know the game.

"I have been refereeing for 20 years and I really enjoy it. It gets me out and it still gives me that buzz. I love the banter because that's the sort of player I was. I talk to players, I'm a communicator.

"The one thing I don't like is when they get personal and backchat. If they do that, then I clamp down on that."

As for the white boots....

"The story behind the white boots is that they were my son's," added Bill. "He used to give me his boots – I must have 15 pairs still to wear.

"There is nothing in the rules to say you can't wear white boots. I'm a colourful character. I'm a bouncy sort of bloke and if my boots are the only talking point then I have done a good job."

Footwear seemed to be a bit of theme on the morning of the game with Harry having splashed out on a new pair. And, like Bill, he will clock up fair few miles in them as he enters his 51st year as a referee.

"I still do the occasional senior game, but it's mainly youth games for me," says Harry, who lives in East Park.

"And I will carry on as long as the old knees keep up. I have a tablet each morning and put some muscle rub and knee supports on, and that does the trick.

"I felt great at the end of the game on Sunday and I still enjoy it. I lost my wife 16 years ago and football is what keeps me going. I love my football.

"But the game is not like it used to be. There is a lack of respect towards referees these days. You get the manager on the touchline having a go and that filters through to the players.

"You have to have a word with them but I haven't got a card out for ages. I prefer to talk to players, it's all about man management. Anyone can get a card out."

Stopped

Terry, 72, is the least experienced of the trio having only decided to pick up a whistle 10 years ago.

But he still boasts plenty of footballing nous having run various youth teams from Bushbury youth club for over 40 years.

"I have been refereeing for about 10 years," he said.

"I used to run football and then stopped to raise a family. But I came back to the sport 10 years ago wanting to be a referee,

"Similar to Harry, I lost my wife and football is a big part of my life and keeps me active.

"I usually do three or four games a weekend and also referee five-a-side at Codsall School on a Monday.

"I do adults and juniors, Wolverhampton Sunday League, Beacon League and the Midland Junior League. I enjoy it so much, that's why I do some many games.

"As long as my legs keep carrying me about I will carry on. I really do sleep well on a Sunday and Monday after all the games. But by the next weekend I am fine to go again."

SPORTING FEATURE

By Nick Elwell

"I have been refereeing for 20 years and I really enjoy it. It gets me out and it still gives me that buzz."

Rider in support plea as he pursues dream

A CYCLIST from the Black Country is aiming to get to the top of his sport – and is calling on support from the area to help him.

Former Wolverhampton Wheelers rider Adam Lewis moved to Belgium four years ago to pursue his riding dream and has been signed up for team T Palm Pole Continental Waloon, which is in the third division of cycling. It means he will be competing in professional races in France, Belgium and Luxembourg from February, but he must pay for himself.

The 22-year-old from Willenhall says he needs around £5,000 to cover the first eight months of the season, paying for rent, food and coaching and has set up an online funding page.

Lewis said: ""I will be racing throughout Europe in some of the most prestigious pro races in France, Belgium, Luxembourg to name just a few. Unfortunately, due to being a third division team they are not required to pay a salary which means my budget is extremely tight."

Visit www.gofundme.com/support-adams-pro-cycling-dream

Premier debut is a Goldson gift

FORMER team-mate Andre Gray led the tributes after Connor Goldson made an emotional Premier League debut for Brighton & Hove Albion.

Wolverhampton-born Goldson was named man of the match in the December 23 clash, after shutting out Gray's Watford on his top-flight bow – 10 months after being withdrawn from action to have heart surgery.

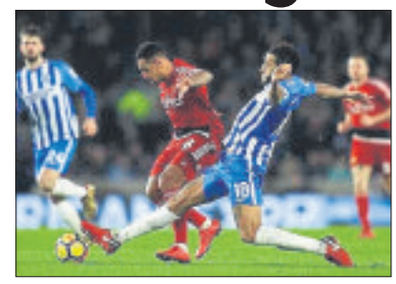
And though Goldson's performance condemned Watford to a fourth straight defeat, Gray could not hide his delight on social media.

Posting a picture of the duo contesting for possession on Twitter, Gray wrote: "From Sunday League Deansfield young boys to the Premier League, against all odds, we did what no-one could dreamed of... not even us I don't think!! Connor Goldson, I'm proud of you beyond belief, you've come through more than I can imagine and now we here! Man of the match on debut speaks for itself. Love you bro." The duo represented Wolverhampton Schools as youngsters before getting their break at Shrewsbury Town.

Although Gray would have to leave for non-league Hinckley, before rising through the ranks with Luton, Brentford, Burnley and now Watford; Goldson established himself in Shropshire.

He helped guide Town to promotion from League Two – and was named in the League Two team of the year – before linking up with Brighton, who were promoted last season under Chris Hughton, although Goldson missed the end of the campaign after a routine heart screening revealed a suspected defect.

After making his debut, Seagulls boss Hughton said: "It's a happy changing room for Connor, because he's a very popular player. We all know what he went through. You have to wait for your chance and I thought he was very good."



Andre Gray and Connor Goldson during the match

Sport

Football officials are showing age red card
Page 39

Top trio at Brummies as Davey in

BIRMINGHAM Brummies have completed a powerhouse top-end trio by snapping up exciting talent Mitchell Davey.

The 27-year-old joins Tom Bacon and Danyon Hume in the Brummies top three, with hot prospect Leon Flint also already confirmed at reserve.

Davey is a popular figure at Perry Barr after an important contribution in the club's play-off final success over Eastbourne in 2016.

Brummies co-promoter David Mason reckons the signing is a real coup. "These are exciting times for Birmingham Speedway," he said.

Meanwhile, two of Brummies teenage aces from last season won't be rejoining.

Taylor Hampshire's college commitments have seen him join Kent while Jack Parkinson-Blackburn does not feature in the owners' final team plans.

Mason said the duo had appeared in a number of team permutations but said they would not be back at Perry Barr.

"With Taylor it's quite simple," he said. "The way his college course is now scheduled, it would be very demanding and nigh on impossible for him to commute to Birmingham from his base near Mildenhall midweek.

"The decision to leave Jack out is something we thought long and hard about.

"Jack is so familiar with Birmingham now and he's come a hell of a long way. But we felt he would personally benefit by going somewhere new for a season."

Ticket prices for new season announced

BIRMINGHAM Brummies have confirmed their prices for the 2018 National League season.

After listening to feedback from supporters, a slightly reduced admission price for concessions has been reintroduced.

Alongside tickets bought before the Early Bird deadline of February 7 will be a free raceday programme for each valid meeting.

A junior season ticket has been introduced for the first time while the age bracket for free admission has been upped to 11-year-olds.

Season tickets include all nine National League fixtures, four National Trophy fixtures, one Knockout Cup fixture and one Challenge fixture. All 2018 season ticket holders will receive a 10 per cent discount off general admission for any additional play-off, Knockout Cup or National Trophy fixtures.

General admission prices are: adults £13; concessions/students (ID must be provided) £12; Juniors (12-16) £3; children 11 and under free.

Season ticket prices are: adults £165; concessions/students £150; Juniors (12-16) £30.

The raceday programme is £3.

Rivalries put aside in mascot tribute

Mascots with Carly and children

WEST Midlands clubs put their rivalries aside to pay a fitting tribute to the late former Albion mascot Richard Eades. Meanwhile funds continue to pour in for his family.

The 42-year-old Baggies fan, who had worn the Albi bird costume, passed away unexpectedly on Boxing Day, while preparing for the game against Everton.

Tributes to the father-of-two, from Wednesbury, were paid during Albion's clash with Arsenal at The Hawthorns on New Year's Eve.

Among them was a touching moment prior to kick-off where Richard's fiancée Carly and two children Lily-Mae, aged eight, and Archie, three, were joined on the pitch by mascots from Walsall, Wolves, Birmingham City and Aston Villa as well as Baggie Bird. West Bromwich Albion expressed their appreciation to them. A Tweet from the club said: "Local rivalries mean nothing today. Our thanks to @AVFCOfficial, @BCFC, @WFCOfficial and @Wolves for their support. #WBA"

Players wore black armbands and a film showing Richard in action was screened to fans, who applauded in the 42nd minute.

Meanwhile thousands of pounds has been donated in his memory, with more than £2,000 donated on a gofundme page.

JAY SET TO FLY AFTER PENALTY

BRAVE Jay Rodriguez will be given a new lease of life from his late goal against Arsenal, according to Baggies boss Alan Pardew.

The £12m summer signing stepped up to take an 89th-minute spot-kick – Albion's first for more than 50 games – at The Hawthorns on New Year's Eve. And he kept his nerve in front of the Birmingham Road End to give the Baggies a well-deserved point against the Gunners.

"It was great for Jay and brave of him to take that penalty because his performance was outstanding," said Pardew. "He just lacks that spark that makes him special. That goal will hopefully give him a new lease of life."

Soft

It was a soft penalty, awarded when Kieran Gibbs struck the ball into Calum Chambers' arm from two yards away. Pardew admitted: "I'd be very upset if it was given against me.

"It was a tough penalty. Obviously the ball has hit his arm. But we deserved it. We've had three or four games here where we've not had a break at all."

Albion were back in action – their first game of 2018 – on Tuesday night at West Ham. And Baggies chairman John Williams has called Premier League chief Richard Scudamore ahead of the trip to complain about unfair preparation times.

With the Hammers going a week in between games, Albion had only 48 hours in between the Arsenal game and the trip to the London Stadium.

Pardew says the quick turnaround put his players at risk of injury, and even took Matt Phillips off during on New Year's Eve because of it.

West Ham, however, had an extra five days of rest, but are in action again tonight (Thursday) against Tottenham. who were also playing on Tuesday night.

Jay Rodriguez slots home the penalty past Arsenal keeper Petr Cech

The Tottenham/West Ham game was switched after staff at Wembley said they could only accommodate 43,000 fans on New Year's Eve because tube stations around the stadium were operating at a reduced capacity.

It had already been moved from Saturday to Sunday by Sky and was not moved back so it could be shown on live television.

Albion have made strong representations to the Premier League and written to them to make their feelings felt. Williams has also called Scudamore personally. "It'll be a tough game, they've had six days' rest," said Pardew. "That is the big issue, how we have got two days in Premier League professional football, putting players at risk, in my opinion, of injury. It's not right, that.

"We all know there's pressure on TV companies for ratings and everything else and games. I understand that. But the league's got to be stronger and say two days is not right."

The Premier League said: "As the fixture had already been selected for live UK broadcast, it was moved to the next available date, which is in line with normal practice."

Applause in honour of keeper Derek

A MINUTE'S applause was held before Stourbridge FC's fixture against Rushall Olympic on New Year's Day, in memory of their former goalkeeper Derek Dudley who also played for Villa and Albion.

Mr Dudley, of Rugeley, who spent four years at Aston Villa in the 1980s and also played for the Baggies, died on New Year's Eve.

Derek Dudley

His former Baggies teammate Daryl Burgess said: "On this night of joy, please raise a glass for my ex team mate Derek Dudley who sadly passed away. Life is short folks, enjoy it."

Mr Dudley, who was 47-years-old, also used to play for Halesowen Town and Chasetown.

Stourbridge FC said in an official statement: "We held a minute's applause before kick-off in memory of our former goalkeeper Derek Dudley who sadly passed away."

Death of boxing referee aged 76

ONE of the world's top boxing referees, who hailed from the Black Country, has died aged 76.

Paul Thomas, born in Brierley Hill, had kept order in almost 300 world title fights. He also officiated thousands of fights in the West Midlands as a judge.

Mr Thomas eventually moved to Derby but son Dean, 52 and one of three children, insists his father always saw himself as a West Midlander.

"I can remember him taking me to the (Wolverhampton) Civic Hall to see all the local fights before he became a referee," he said.

"It was around 1977 or 78 that he started as a referee and you have to finish when you are 65, but then he still did some work overseas. All in all, it was near on 40 years as a referee."

Dean added: "He went on to live in Derby but the Black Country is his roots."

The funeral is at Markeaton Crematorium in Derby at 2pm on January 12.

★★★

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING The recycled content of newspapers in 2015 was 62.8%

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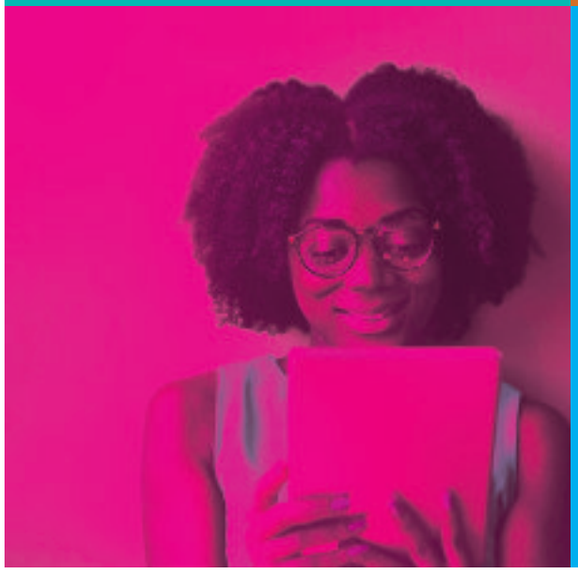

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